2015

PARENT DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING DURING THE LAUNCHING STAGE OF PARENTHOOD

Deborah F. Keys
University of Kentucky, dfkeys01@yahoo.com

STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student's advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student's thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Deborah F. Keys, Student

Dr. Hyungsoo Kim, Major Professor

Dr. Hyungsoo Kim, Director of Graduate Studies

PARENT DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING DURING THE LAUNCHING STAGE OF PARENTHOOD

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Family Sciences in the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment at the University of Kentucky

By

Deborah French Keys

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Hyungsoo Kim, Professor of Family Sciences

Lexington, Kentucky

2015

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

PARENT DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING DURING THE LAUNCHING STAGE OF PARENTHOOD

At the present time, the young adult transition into adulthood has been extended, which has also extended the launching stage. One result of the extended launching stage is that parents are now involved in active parenting longer than before. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of the extended launching stage in key areas (the parent-child relationship and parent support) on parental emotional wellbeing. The contribution of this research is that it adds to the limited body of knowledge about normative launching stage parenting practices and outcomes. This dissertation is a three chapter manuscript that uses data from the Longitudinal Study of Generations. Chapter one provides the background for the dissertation. Chapter two, using cross-sectional analyses, examines the effect of parent support and the parent-child relationship on parental emotional wellbeing between two parent cohorts—1985 and 2005. Chapters three and four are longitudinal studies that use cross-sectional regressions and fixed effect models to estimate parent role changes involving parental role evaluation and wellbeing at four time waves—1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. Chapter three focuses on the effect of changes in parent support on parents' emotional wellbeing. Chapter four investigates the impact of the parent-child relationship on parent role evaluation. The results of the analyses show that compared to their parents at the same point in their life course, contemporary parents have a lower quality of life. Results also find that over time, wellbeing is impacted by the quality of the parent-child relationship, but supporting young adult offspring does not impact self-esteem.

KEYWORDS: parental support, adult status goals, parent-child relationship, role evaluation, emotional wellbeing

Deborah French Keys
Student Signature

03/23/2015
Date

PARENT DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING DURING THE LAUNCHING STAGE OF PARENTHOOD

By

Deborah French Keys

Dr. Hyungsoo Kim
Director of Dissertation

Dr. Hyungsoo Kim
Director of Graduate Studies

03/23/2015
Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my darling husband Rhenzi. Words cannot adequately express how much I appreciate the countless small and large ways he demonstrated his support. His encouragement always struck just the right tone, whether it was bringing home dinner or making excel spreadsheets. I also dedicate this work to my family who all deserve special recognition. From the moment I applied to graduate school they were all unfailingly encouraging and offered practical support. I thank my mother who was always interested in my progress and who faithfully prayed for my success. My daughters and their spouses, Camille and Mark, Lydia and Victor and Abigail read and edited drafts. They were always available to offer feedback and encouragement. Whatever I attempt in life is always pursued with you in mind and heart!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt thanks go to all who supported, helped, and encouraged me on my doctorate journey. I appreciate Dr. Werner-Wilson who enthusiastically invited me to apply to the program. I greatly appreciate my committee: Dr. Donna Smith, Dr. Feist-Price, and Dr. Nathan Wood. Special thanks go to my chair, Dr. Hyungsoo Kim, who guided me to produce a dissertation with an unfolding story-line designed to engage my reader, but that was always anchored in scientific rigor. I am grateful to my classmates, particularly Cheryl Ramey and Katrina Akande who helped me through qualifying exams.

I also deeply appreciate Jessica Lendon and Gary Horlacher without whom the Longitudinal Study of Generations dataset would still be a mystery. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the University of Kentucky statistical consultants.

Special thanks go to Vincent and Sherron French, Barbara Meeks, Peggy Dixon, LaDonna Polk, Frances Lockett, Marion Gibson, and the greeters at Imani Baptist Church who faithfully cheered me on, read final drafts, prayed for me and referred to me as 'Dr.' while it was months in the making.

Finally, I thank my Lord, who called me to this task and enabled me to carry it out. For our (yours and mine) good and His glory.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At each stage of parenthood, an essential aim of the parent role is to perform specific tasks that promote the development of children (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009; Reitzes & Mutran, 2002). The central thesis of this study is that individual but connected tasks have at least one core purpose and that in the course of performing task(s) and achieving this purpose parents also foster their own development (Parens, 1975). For example, in this study, the specific tasks of parents in the launching stage—the period between adolescence and adulthood—is facilitating the independence of and maintaining connections with young adult offspring (Galinsky, 1987; Young, Marshall, Domene, Graham, Logan, Zaidman-Zarit, & Lee, 2008). In this example, facilitating offspring's independence and maintaining connections are tasks that, if successfully completed, will achieve the core developmental objective of redefining the parent role. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the impact of redefining the parent role on parent development during the launching stage.

Background

Figure 1.1 is an overview that locates this dissertation in the field of family sciences. The diagram presents parent development, the focus of this study, as one dimension in the study of parents, which is a subset of individuals in the family. Parent development is shown to occur within various contexts: ethnicity, sociohistorical time and place, gender, and stages. These contexts contribute to stage specific parenting outcomes. In this study, relevant contexts are the launching stage, sociohistorical time and place, and gender. Ethnicity is an important aspect of parent development, but not addressed in this research. Gender is addressed in chapters three and four where the term 'parents' refers to mothers. In these chapters, where possible the literature specific to mothers is referenced. Parents' financial wellbeing, marital satisfaction, and physical health are not the focus of this research, but are discussed briefly in all chapters.

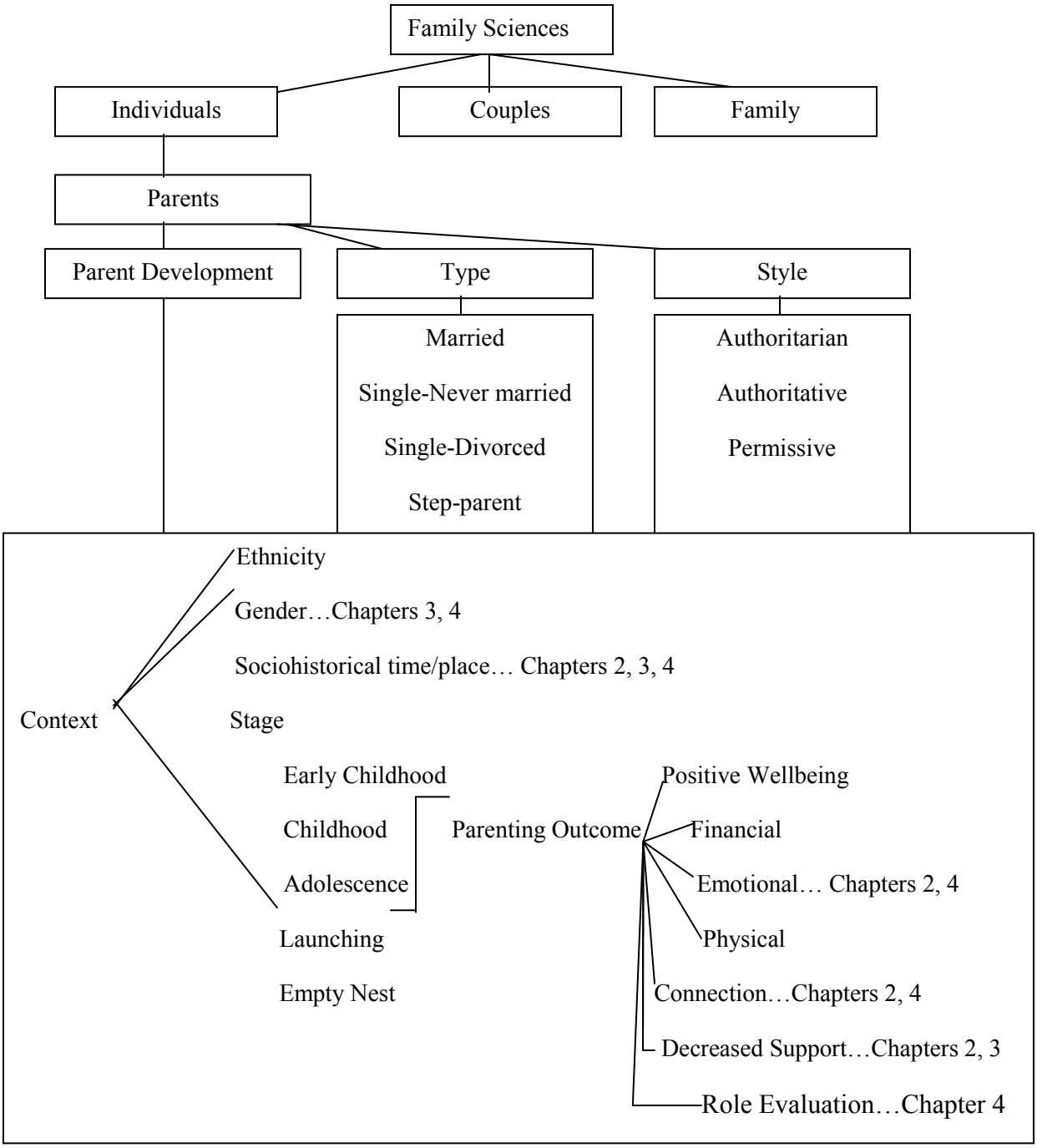

Figure 1.1 Overview of Parent Development during the Launching Stage of Parenthood

There are various definitions of parent development. In this study it is defined as internal and external change in the parent role. The character of parent development is that it is ongoing, triggered by the development of the eldest child, and occurs in one or more areas of psychosocial

functioning (Palkovitz, 1996). These areas are: (a) behaviorally, what parents do, (b) relationally, how parents and children interact, and (c) cognitively, how parents evaluate themselves in the parent role (Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Palkovitz, 1996; Palkovitz & Palm, 2009). With the possible exception of the transition into parenthood, development is greater during launching stage than any other stage (Rossi, 1968). Despite this fact, there is a gap in empirical research that clearly details developmental changes in the parent role over the course of the launching stage.

It is important to understand changes that are specific to the launching stage. First, the extended transition to adulthood has also extended the launching stage (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998). Second, the launching stage is the transitional stage that bridges active and supportive parenting. Active parenting is described in the literature as those stages in which parents are responsible for all that involves minor children—those in infancy, childhood, and adolescence (Galinsky, 1987). In contrast, supportive parenting is defined as the launching and empty nest stages of parenthood in which parents relinquish control or authority over children, but remain attached and connected (Galinsky, 1987; Koepke & Denissen, 2012; Lomranz, 1995; Palkovitz, 1996). Parent development that occurs during the transition from active to supportive parenting is gradual, that is, as adolescence ends, caregiving functions do not abruptly cease. In addition, parents and children do not immediately develop mutually supportive, peer-like relationships. Instead, the transition requires time for parents and children to negotiate different ways of behaving, relating, and feeling (Francis-Connolly, 2000; Gullette, 2002).

In terms of trends affecting the family, from a sociohistorical perspective, the current surge of Baby Boomer parents means that there are now unprecedented numbers of parents in the launching stage. One characteristic of this parent cohort is their increased longevity. With increased longevity the empty nest stage has the potential of becoming the longest stage of parenthood. This possibility underscores the importance of understanding transition processes

occurring in the launching stage (which leads up to the empty nest) that could later impact older parents (Arias, 2011; Fingerman, Cheng, Birditt, & Zarit, 2012).

Therefore, given that parent development is dynamic and involves key areas of psychosocial functioning, it is important to understand how these specific developmental changes affect the emotional wellbeing of parents. Relevant to this research, the launching stage is a pivotal stage in parenthood during which families evaluate child rearing efforts and prepare for future late life family interactions, which affect society as well as families (Ryff, Lee, Essex, & Schmutte, 1994; Ryff, Schmutte, & Lee, 1996; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010). Building on the current research on parent development, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine parent development in the launching stage, focusing on behavioral and relational tasks as subsets of the core task, redefining the parent role. Behavioral tasks are conceptualized as facilitating offspring independence (Young et al., 2008). In this study, parents decrease support as offspring demonstrate self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency is objectively observed as offspring make progress in attaining adult status goals. Adult status goals are completed schooling, employment, living away from home, and marriage (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010). Relational tasks are conceptualized as maintaining connectedness. Maintaining connectedness is measured by the degree of closeness and conflict between parents and children. These tasks are hypothesized as impacting the cognitive task, role evaluation (Ryff et al., 1994; Ryff et al, 1996). Role evaluation is defined as parent appraisal of parent satisfaction, performance, and self-esteem. The major hypothesis of this research is that together, behavioral, relational, and cognitive tasks strongly impact parent wellbeing. That is, launching parents who successfully perform these tasks have positive launching stage outcomes. Positive outcomes are: (a) transferred, therefore, decreased responsibility, (b) mutually supportive parent-child relationships, and (c) positive evaluations of the parent role. These outcomes are expected to positively influence parent emotional wellbeing.

Figure 1.2 presents the conceptual model of this dissertation's three chapters, graphically illustrating the constructs measured in this study. The figure describes the factors hypothesized to

affect parental role evaluation and emotional wellbeing: parental support and the parent-child relationship. Chapter two investigates differences in the impact of parental support and the parent-child relationship on parental emotional wellbeing between two parent cohorts. Chapter three investigates the effects of parental support on parental emotional wellbeing. Chapter four examines the impact of the parent-child relationship on parental role evaluation. The model also describes change over time: chapter two measures change between two cohorts—1985 and 2005, and chapters three and four measure change over four time waves: 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005.

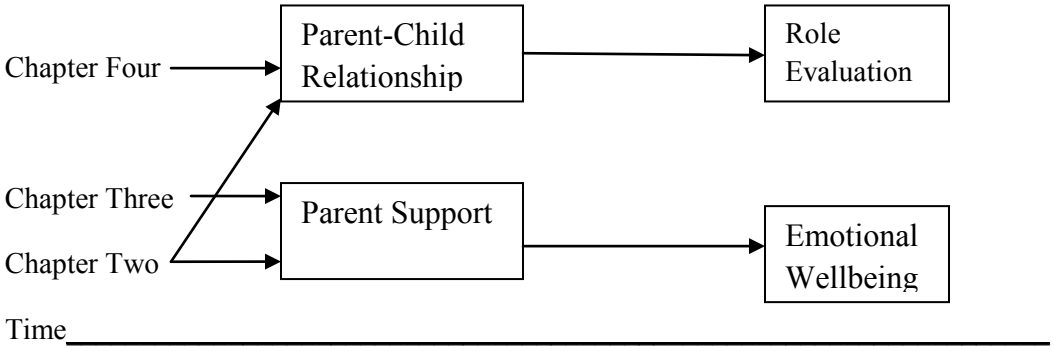

Figure 1.2 Chapter One Conceptual Model of Chapters Two, Three, and Four

The remainder of this paper, chapter one, outlines the construction of the thought processes that form the basis for the other chapters. The literature review that follows provides a brief overview of the roles and stages of parenthood focusing on the launching stage. This section also reviews the research on the concept of "transitions" including definitions, conceptualizations, and universal properties. The final sections describe: (a) the dataset used in this research- the Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG), (b) the study limitations, and (c) the dissertation format.

Literature Review

The interdisciplinary approach taken in this study draws from family theories, nursing, higher education, and psychology. Family science, in the contexts of the launching stage and the parent role, provides the foundation for this research. To understand transition processes and outcomes,

the study combines models developed in psychology, nursing, and higher education (Cowan, 1991; Santiago, 2004; Schumacher, Jones, & Meleis, 1999; Summers, 2002).

Stages

Common features associated with stages, defined as divisions in development, are that they are separate, inclusive, and involve tasks or goals. Within family sciences there have been problems meeting the first two criteria. First, family stages are defined as periods in family life that stand apart from periods before and after it (Aldous, 1978), but demarcations between family stages also can be characterized as indistinct (Hill, 1986). The present study uses transition concepts to frame parenting stages as both overlapping and separate. That is, while the ending of adolescence triggers the beginning of the launching stage there is no clear delineation between the two (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995; Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009; Rossi, 1968; Smith, Hamon, Ingoldsby, & Miller, 2009; Spence & Lonner, 1971; Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010). This is also true of the launching and empty nest stage (Fingerman, Pillemer, Silverstein, Suitor, 2012; Fingerman, et al., 2012; Gullette, 2002; Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002; Pillemer & Suitor, 1991; Pillemer & Suitor, 2002).

Related to problems with inclusivity, studying family stages is challenging because of the wide variability in family structures. The eight stage family stage model first created by family development theorists, Evelyn Duvall and Reuben Hill, described the nuclear family and was organized around marriage and parenthood (Rodgers & White, 2009). In response to feedback, this model has been revised over time to include family structures beyond that of the nuclear family, e.g. divorced and single-parent households (Hill, 1986; Smith et al., 2009). These revisions notwithstanding, critics of the concept of family stages question whether there are consistent developmental characteristics of families across cultures (Aldous, 1990; LaRossa & Sinha, 2006). This criticism reflects concerns about a single model's ability to represent all family forms. The primary concern of this criticism seems to revolve around family stages, rather than parenthood stages. This study avoids controversy about family structure by limiting its

interest to stages that evolve once family members become parents. While it is possible that stages within the parenthood trajectory do not possess invariant features, focusing on parent development that follows the chronological age of the oldest child (Hill, 1986) enables me to examine the developmental path taken by most parents independent of how they came to the parent role. Nevertheless, because of its complexity, we do not know if parenthood stage distinctions and developments are invariant across culture and ethnicity.

The last feature of stages is that there are tasks or goals associated with each stage (Galinsky, 1987; Rossi, 1968). As discussed previously, during the launching stage there are two tasks: to decrease the level of involvement in the day to day provision of children's basic needs (Young, et al., 2008), and to maintain and develop a more mutually supportive relationship (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995). Together, achievement of these goals results in a shift from active to more supportive parenting.

The launching stage. The following discussion of the launching stage includes: descriptions of criteria for entry into and exit from the stage, clarification of what it means to launch children, and discussion of the launching stage as a transition stage. Classically, families are described as entering the launching stage when the eldest child leaves the home (Aldous, 1978, 1990; Rossi, 1968; Smith, et al., 2009). However, there are problems with portraying it in this manner. For example, a younger child may be the first to leave home or offspring may not leave at all. Therefore, laying aside the requirement of home-leaving, in this research, the launching stage is characterized as a family transition that is triggered by specific events in the development of the eldest child—such as turning 18 years old or graduating from high school (DeVries, Kerrick, & Oetinger, 2007; Hill, 1986). Relative to its duration, unlike adolescence, which is bounded by age, the launching stage does not have a definite endpoint. In this study, the launching stage is considered to continue as long as there are children in the home (Smith et al., 2009; Waldron-Hennessey & Sabatelli, 1997).

Questions also arise over what it means to be "launched". In the past, children were considered "launched" when they achieved adult status, such as employment, leaving home, and particularly marriage (Arnett, 2001). In contrast, I contend that contemporary parents, in the United States, must rely upon less objective standards to assess when children are launched. Recent studies of child home leaving find that compared to the past, young people may enter and exit home repeatedly, returning parents to the launching stage (Goldscheider, Thornton, & Yang, 2001; Tang, 1997). These studies highlight the complexity of the launching stage as an extended period, which is best described as a dual family transition involving young adults' transition into adulthood and parents' transition to the empty nest.

Transitions

Transition definitions and conceptualizations used in this research are borrowed from three disciplines: (a) nursing, (b) higher education, and (c) psychology—drawing on family systems theory (Santiago, 2004; Schumacher et al., 1999; Summers, 2002; Cowan, 1991). Scholars in these disciplines have created interventions for families who are experiencing various transitions, such as elderly family members in transition (Schumacher et al., 1999), adult students in higher education (Santiago, 2004; Summers, 2002), and fatherhood (Cowan, 1991). Relative to parenthood, the transition into parenthood is the most studied parenting transition (Cowan & Cowan, 1995; LaRossa & Sinha, 2006; Rossi, 1968; Schulz, Cowan, & Cowan, 2006). Understanding transitions has also been useful for professional practitioners who find that families are most likely to seek professional help during periods such as these when they are open to change and are aware of the need for new skills and/or knowledge (Blythe, 2010; Cowan, 1991; Palkovitz & Palm, 2009).

Definitions and universal properties. Transitions are broadly defined as events that result in changes from one state, situation, or role to another (Blythe, 2010; Santiago, 2004; Schumacher & Meleis, 1994). As it relates to this research, missing from this definition is the understanding that change is a process, occurring over time (Cowan, 1991; Palkovitz & Palm, 2009; Santiago,

2004; Schumacher et al., 1999). Change and time are two universal properties or commonalities that are relevant to understanding transition processes and outcomes during the launching stage.

Transitional change is distinguished from non-transitional change by the meaning family members assign to the process (Cowan, 1991; Schumacher et al., 1999; Schumacher & Meleis, 1994). Inner and external growth is required in order for change to be transitional.

> For a life change to be designated as transitional, it must involve a qualitative shift from the inside looking out (how the individual understands and feels about the self and the world) and from the outside looking in (reorganization of the individual or family's level of personal competence, role arrangements, and relationships with significant others) (Cowan, 1991, p.5).

In this study, inner growth is seen as occurring as parents experience a fundamental shift in their sense of self as they take inventory of and evaluate their parenting efforts. Changes in caregiving responsibilities and development of a mutually supportive parent-child relationship are indices of external growth, and evidence of modified role arrangements and relationship expectations.

Time, the second universal property, refers to the idea that changes of the magnitude described by Cowan take time to develop and occur in stages or phases: the ending (the beginning of the transition), the middle, and the beginning (the ending of the transition and the beginning of the next stage) (Black, Holditch-Davis, & Miles, 2009; Schumacher & Meleis, 1994; Summers, 2002). Ending phases are triggered by a major event and marked by disequilibrium and instability (Schumacher et al., 1999). In this research, the coming-of-age of the oldest child is the event that signals the ending of adolescence and the beginning of the transition to adulthood for offspring, and the launching stage for parents. According to Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972), family transitions are normative, anticipated and are not likely to rise to the level of a crisis.

The middle phase is an uncomfortable period of liminality—a psychological state of being in limbo-"neither here nor there" (Black et al., 2009, p.4). At the time of this study, young adult's transition to adulthood has been prolonged due to changing economic and social conditions. Economic instability and changing workplace needs have made it more difficult for young adults

to be financially independent without postsecondary education (Tanner & Arnett, 2009; Shulman, Feldman, Blatt, Cohen, & Mahler, 2005). Changing social mores have led to greater acceptance of premarital sexual activity by children and parents alike, and may be one explanation for delayed age of first marriages (Arnett & Taber, 1994; Arnett, 2000). Consequently, young people now take longer to achieve traditional adult status goals.

In this study, offspring's prolonged transition to adulthood is thought to extend the middle phase by prolonging parent involvement in caregiving responsibilities (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995). Depending upon whether parents experience the child's transition as on-time or off-time, this may have implications for how parents judge their performance and impact their role satisfaction. According to Neugarten (1979), individual and family events or processes that occur at the expected time or sequence are described as being on-time. Those that occur early, late, or out of order are experienced as off-time. In this study, contemporary parents are thought to experience their young adult offspring's transition to adulthood as both on-time and off-time. In most cases, these parents' own transition to adulthood was earlier and quicker. For example, they finished schooling, left home, and started families in their early twenties (Arnett, 2001; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). Therefore, in comparison, their children's prolonged transition may appear to be off-time (Modell, Furstenberg, Jr., & Hershberg, 1976). Alternately, on the basis of reasons previously discussed, the extended transition to adulthood now may be considered normative, therefore, on-time. Furthermore, parents may now place greater importance on the quality or closeness of the parent-child relationship than on control and achievement of traditional adult status markers (Kenyon, 2008). Studies finding that parents experience satisfaction or distress from their children's successes or failures suggest that child goal achievement is a standard against which parents measure their effectiveness (Fingerman et al., 2012; Pillemer & Suitor, 1991). One ramification of the prolonged transition to adulthood is offspring's delayed goal achievement. However, I argue that this delay does not mean that parents have delayed self-evaluation. Instead, it most likely means that, of necessity, the relative importance of other areas

by which they judge effectiveness has increased. Because of this ambiguity, parents may experience difficulty redefining the parent role. I hypothesize that challenges in these areas affects both the way parents evaluate themselves in the parent role and their emotional wellbeing.

The Parent Role

Family roles are sets of rules or norms for behavior that change over time with the development of family members (Rodgers & White, 2009). Drawing on symbolic interaction theory, this research defines the parent role as a family position in which expectations regarding role content: (a) are learned through interactions with other family members, which is role taking and (b) develop or change over time as parents actively redefine and individualize what the role means to them, which is role making (Gullette, 2002; Hill, 1986; Reitzes & Mutran, 2002). Parent role taking occurs through interactions with one's parents, peers, formal parent education (e.g. books and classes), and society-at-large—the media, advertisements, and religious teachings. In this study, role taking is limited to role content that is learned through interactions between individual parents and the launching child.

In her seminal work, Rossi (1968) identified four developmental phases of roles that somewhat parallel parenthood stages: (a) anticipatory or training, (b) honeymoon or adjustment, (c) plateau or full enactment, and (d) disengagement-termination. In the launching stage, which corresponds with Rossi's disengagement-termination phase, remaking the parent role is challenging because there is a lack of consensus within the family system, as well as, society, about how to launch (Fingerman et al., 2012). Though there are official designations for when parents are released from legal responsibilities, the launching stage is described as the "normless frontier" (Ames, 1999, p.24), when there is a lack of norms for when parental obligations end (Hill, 1986; Rossi, 1968). The terms 'disengagement' and 'termination' suggest that just as parents transition into the parent role; they also transition out of it. In this research, the end to parental authority and obligation is better described as 'the transition out of active parenting'

(DeVries et al., 2007), a conceptualization that recognizes both continuity and change in role content, rather than termination of the parent role (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987).

The heart of this research is concerned with both continuity and change in the content or functions of the parent role during the launching stage. Continuity refers to role functions that remain essentially the same through parenthood, and change is seen as role content that is modified or redefined. In this research, the goals parents are expected to achieve during the launching stage, decreasing parent support—such as daily household activities-cleaning, cooking, and laundry, providing transportation, and providing financial assistance, and maintaining the relationship, reflect the ongoing nature of the parent role.

Continuity and change in transferring responsibility. Related to decreasing parent support, continuity and change in the role content refer to continuous but reduced functional support (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987; Evenson, & Simon, 2005; Rossi, 1968; Young et al., 2008). Though researchers do not identify specific tasks and responsibilities that parent relinquish, it is generally understood that an important objective during this stage is for parents to give up "the role of omnipotent and responsible caregiver" (Koepke and Denissen, 2012, p. 83). Parents in the launching stage look forward to the empty nest when they will be relieved of the pressure of 'onerous parental role obligations' (Evenson & Simon, 2005 p. 344; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972). The more capable the child, the less support parents need provide, which results in the parents' role being transformed from authority figure to supporter (Roberts, Block, & Block, 1984; Parens, 1975; Spence & Lonner, 1971).

Continuity and change in the parent-child relationship. Continuity in the relationship between parents and children is characterized as mutual, ongoing, ambivalent, and significant for both parents and children (Ames, 1999; Fingerman et al., 2012; Francis-Connolly, 2000; Gullette, 2002; Thompson, Acock, & Clark, 1985; Waldron-Hennessey & Sabatelli, 1997; Umberson et al., 2010). From the perspective of young adults, a growing body of research aimed toward understanding the transition to adulthood, indicates that the parent-adult offspring relationship is

important (Arnett & Taber, 1994; Arnett, 2000, 2001, 2007). These studies find that an adult-like relationship with parents outranks traditional adult status goals as the major yardstick by which offspring measure their own adult status. Further, studies also report that the relationship is reciprocal. For example, interactions with offspring help to keep parents abreast of current social trends and conditions (Koepke & Denissen, 2012; Thompson et al., 1985). Despite the mutual nature of the parent-child relationship, according to the intergenerational stake perspective, Bengtson (2001), due to their greater investment, parents tend to rate the relationship more favorably than do children.

Relative to change, the ongoing quality of the parent-young adult child relationship suggests that it is unchanging; however, the nature of the relationship between parents and young adult offspring during the launching stage serves to distinguish it from the childhood stage. For example, unlike childhood, parents and offspring in the launching stage can and do choose their physical proximity and level of emotional closeness (Lüscher & Pillemer, 1998; Thompson et al., 1985; Waldron-Hennessey & Sabatelli, 1997). These authors report that conflicts between parents and young adults that are common during the launching stage require that family members establish new interaction patterns. The outcome of these new patterns is not isolated to the domain of the parent-child relationship only. Changes in role content in maintaining the parent-child relationship most likely affects how parents appraise their satisfaction and performance, but little is known about parent self-evaluation in this regard.

Role Evaluation

According to Palkovitz (1996), parenthood marker events (such as the transition to adulthood, the launching stage, and the empty nest stage) trigger turning points in adult development. In this study, the launching stage as a turning point in adult development, impacts parents who are typically midlife. Empirical studies of these parents show that self-evaluation is a major developmental objective, involving both gains and losses that are experienced as satisfactions and regrets (DeVries et al., 2007; Lachman, 2004; Waldron-Hennessey & Sabatelli, 1997). The

literature is sparse that investigates the factors that influence how parents judge themselves in the parent role.

Longitudinal Study of Generations

This research uses data from the University of Southern California's Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG), a study about intergenerational family relations of California families (Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012). The LSOG began in 1971 with a survey of eligible grandparents who were selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure from the 840,000 membership list of a California Health Maintenance Organization in Los Angeles. Respondents included 2044 individuals from 300 three generation families from the original sample of over 7000 individuals. The original study participants were first surveyed when grandparents (the first generation) were in their sixties, parents (the middle generation) were in their forties, and grandchildren (the third generation) were aged 15 to 26. Mail-back surveys were administered in 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. In 1991 the fourth generation was added, the great-grandchildren of the initial group. The sample is generally representative of White, middle income families with above high school education. Funded by the National Institute on Aging, data from the LSOG have been used in 52 peer reviewed journal articles (Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012).

The purpose of the LSOG is to investigate the impact of intergenerational relationships on individual family members' wellbeing from early to late adulthood (Bengtson, 2009; Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012). There are a number of benefits in using the LSOG. The data include items relevant to this research (e.g. role evaluation, emotional wellbeing, parent support, and the quality of parent-child relationship). The LSOG contains a large sample of parents who meet the criteria of being in the launching stage. The longitudinal nature of the data allows the investigation of change over time. Finally, the data is recent, allowing examination of the impact of recent societal changes on parent development during the launching stage.

The major limitation to using the LSOG is that the sample lacks geographic, cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic heterogeneity. Though the initial participants were California families, currently, one-half of the families, mostly the third and fourth generations (the subsample of interest in this research), are geographically located throughout the United States (Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012). This means that one-half of the most recent respondents comprise a national sample; however, results can only be generalized to the initial population.

The lack of ethnic and socioeconomic diversity is a significant disadvantage in using the LSOG data. An important feature of transitions is that the meaning of change to individuals must be understood within the context of culture, making the lack of heterogeneity difficult to overlook (Schumacher & Meleis, 1994). Related to African-American parents, some parenting concerns, e.g. grandparents raising grandchildren and preparing racially socialized children, (Blacker, 2005; McAdoo, 2002) are ethnically unique and most likely have significant bearing on how parents approach and experience the launching stage. However, findings from a similar, but dated study indicate no statistical significance in parent satisfaction and the affective aspects of the parent-young adult relationship based on ethnicity (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987). Other concerns cited by McAdoo (2002) (inadequate financial resources, issues related to education, and single parenthood), reflect economic inequities that are also issues of many low income parents independent of race or ethnicity.

Research examining African American parents needs to take into consideration the wide range of family structures and socioeconomic realities (McAdoo, 2002). Given the eligibility requirements of the original LSOG participants (membership in a large health maintenance organization), ethnic family members would most likely share similar socioeconomic characteristics with their White counterparts. While this is not to say that similar demographic characteristics equal similar life circumstances, it does mean that the advantages of the LSOG warrant its use for studying launching parents with the understanding that its findings will be

incomplete, particularly in an increasingly ethnically diverse society and in light of a widening economic gap.

Limitations

The limitations of the present study are: (a) though both parents and children influence transition outcomes, only parents' influence will be measured, (b) the lack of attention to sociohistorical factors, and (c) problems with heterogeneity (George, 1993). The parent-child relationship is bidirectional, meaning that each impact the other (Lomranz, 1995; Young et al., 2008). Nevertheless, this research focuses only on the parent perspective because the child viewpoint has been widely investigated due to recent interest in young adults' transitions to adulthood (Arnett & Taber, 1994; Arnett, 2000, 2001, 2007; Shulman et al. 2005). Similar interest in launching parents exists, but primarily concerns the effects of coresiding parents and young adults (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995; Mitchell & Gee, 1996; Mitchell, 2006). Further, as launching is essentially a parenting concept, research focusing on the parent perspective contributes to the field of knowledge related to parent development.

Sociohistorical factors discussed earlier (economic instability, greater call for postsecondary education, and changes in social more) are important contextual factors that most likely influence parent self-evaluation and emotional wellbeing. Although chapter two measures cohort differences, the focus of this research is micro-level rather than macro-level affects. Therefore, contextual factors, beyond that of the launching stage, will not be examined in this study.

Related to problems with heterogeneity, critics of launching stage and transition to adulthood research cite wide variability of family types and pathways through this period as a major concern (Arnett, 2007; Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Examples of these concerns include: (a) families that include multiple generations—minor children still living at home, multiple launching children, and/or older family members, (b) the wide age variability of parents in the launching stage, and (c) children who do not leave the family home for a number of reasons—economic, preference, and/or health limitations. Furthermore, socioeconomics play a role in launching with middle and

upper income families better positioned to help children become financially independent (Flanagan, Osgood, Foster, & Cusick, 2008; Goldscheider et al., 2001; Roy, Veseley, Buckmiller, & Fitzgerald, 2008). Ethnic and cultural differences also influence how parents prepare children to manage life on their own (Furstenberg, 2008; Kefalas & Carr, 2008), and rural and urban families may also approach launching differently.

The wide variability among launching families and the previously discussed lack of heterogeneity in the dataset used in this research are major limitations. Despite these problems, this research has implications for predicting some normative parenting patterns. Seen in this light, this work makes a strong contribution toward identifying normative launching stage parenting practices and outcomes and provides a starting place for future studies.

Conclusion

In summary, parent development of the parent role is a dynamic phenomenon (Reitzes & Mutran, 2002; Palkovitz, 1996; Palkovitz & Palm, 2009). Research clearly indicates that the launching stage is a major turning point in parenthood, during which parents are expected to perform stage-sensitive tasks in an environment where familiar boundaries and roles no longer fit and new role definitions are not yet formed. This results in movement from active to supportive parenting involving critical shifts in how parents define the parent role (Galinsky, 1987; Gullette, 2002). In the present study, these shifts are posited to impact how parents evaluate themselves in the parent role and affect parents' emotional wellbeing.

The present study offers major contributions to empirical research on parent development. First, there are few studies on parent development that specifically address the launching stage. Consequently, the current body of research does not reflect changing societal norms, resulting in gaps in knowledge about normative launching stage parenting practices. Second, understanding normative parenting practices has important implications for professional practitioners, as there are few guidelines to help parents navigate the launching stage (Ames, 1999). Moreover,

according to Furstenberg (2010), current public family policies largely ignore the problems of families in the launching stage. Furstenberg notes that middle income and affluent parents bear the burden for higher education, healthcare, and living expenses for young people, providing financial and time support in the extended transition to adulthood. This scholar also finds that there a critical need for policies that support young people whose families cannot assist them in becoming financially independent. Finally, identifying normative parent development, particularly the development of the parent-child relationship, may lay the groundwork for the tenor or course of parent-child interactions during the empty nest stage (Ames, 1999; Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002; Pillemer & Suitor, 2002).

Dissertation Format

The three chapters that comprise this dissertation address the stage-sensitive tasks parents undertake during the launching stage as they affect parents' emotional wellbeing. The chapters focus on three main questions: (a) how does the extended launching stage affect parental emotional wellbeing, (b) how does parent support affect parental emotional wellbeing over time, and (c) how does the relationship between parents and children affect how parents evaluate themselves in the parent role over the course of the launching stage?

The purpose of chapter two, "The Extended Launching Stage: Does it Matter to Parents' Wellbeing?", is to investigate if the impact of parental support and the parent-child relationship on parental emotional wellbeing differ based on parent cohort membership. Based on the life course perspective that historical context influences life course transitions, this research hypothesizes that there will be differences in the cohorts. I expect higher parent support and greater closeness in the parent-child relationship in the younger cohort. In addition, I expect no change in parental emotional wellbeing between cohorts because of the high value parents place on parenthood independent of the costs or historical setting. Regressions will be conducted comparing two data collection points—1985 and 2005.

The goal of chapter three, "The Effect of Parent Support on Maternal Wellbeing across the Launching Stage", is to examine the effect of changes in parent support on maternal emotional wellbeing during four time waves (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005). I hypothesize that parent support decreases across time. A second hypothesis is that decreased parent support will be positively correlated with maternal emotional wellbeing. Cross-sectional regressions will be used to measure the relationship between support and wellbeing. Fixed effects models will be conducted to estimate change in wellbeing at four time waves (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005).

The aim of chapter four, "The Effect of the Quality of the Parent-child Relationship on Role Evaluation during the Launching Stage", is to investigate the degree to which the parent-child relationship affects mothers' role evaluations. Role evaluation is conceptualized as the following dependent variables: role satisfaction, role performance, and self-esteem. The quality of the parent-child relationship is conceptualized as closeness and conflict. It is expected that role evaluation increases or becomes more positive over time and that declines in levels of conflict in the parent-child relationship correspond to higher role evaluation. Cross-sectional regressions of the dependent and independent variables, followed by fixed effects models will be used to measure change in role evaluation at four data collection points (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005).

CHAPTER TWO: THE EXTENDED LAUNCHING STAGE: DOES IT MATTER TO PARENTS' WELLBEING?

There has been much interest in the transition into adulthood, with research supporting public perception that it now takes young people longer than it did their parents to achieve traditional adult status goals (Arnett, 2007; Flanagan, Osgood, Foster, & Cusick, 2008; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Rankin & Kenyon, 2008; Roy, Veseley, Buckmiller, & Fitzgerald, 2008). In this study, traditional goals are defined as completing school, gaining employment, leaving home, and marriage. Though scholars are recognizing that an extended transition into adulthood is accompanied by a prolonged launching stage, the perspective of launching parents, those who are parenting children who are between adolescence and adulthood, has been less studied (Fingerman, Cheng, Wesselmann, Zarit, Furstenberg, & Birditt, 2012; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010). Consequently, there is much to be known empirically about how parents experience the prolonged launching stage. This study focuses on parents' emotional well-being as it is affected by extended parent support and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Furthermore, while intuitively changes in these areas must have an impact, we do not know to what extent the launching experiences of contemporary parents actually differs from that of their parents. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the major changes associated with the extended launching stage and their effect on parental emotional well-being.

The historical benchmark or timeframe that is used as a point of comparison in this study is the 1970s and early 1980s, the time period when large numbers of baby boomers were being launched. During the 1970s, the pacing of the transition to adulthood was more prevalent—meaning that a greater incidence of young people attended school, entered the workforce, left home, and married—and less prolonged, meaning it did not take as long to enter adulthood compared to a century earlier (Modell, Furstenberg, & Hershberg, 1976). This suggests that the parents launching children during this historical period were free of childrearing responsibilities

relatively early in the phase. It also suggests that the launching stage may have had a minimal emotional or psychological impact on parents given that the length of the transition from active to supportive parenting was short.

One consequence of prolonged engagement in active parenting is continued parental support of all types post high school. In fact, the literature indicates that parents in the United States have been largely left with the financial burden associated with the prolonged transition to adulthood (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010). Although extended parent support is a reality, there remains a need to investigate the psychological meaning or effect of the extended launching stage on parental wellbeing (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Mitchell, 2006).

Understanding parental wellbeing is important for a number of reasons. First, the salience of the parent role may increase over the family life course as parents age and have fewer career and community roles by which to measure personal success (Milkie, Bierman, & Schieman, 2008). Second, in families in which parents and adult children have developed mutually supportive relationships, for older family members the parent role may be their most stable social connection (Milkie et al., 2008). Next, related to physical wellbeing, parenthood is associated with both promoting healthy behavior and decreasing practices that undermine health (Umberson & Gove, 1989). Further, Herzog, Rodgers, and Woodworth (1982), find that parenthood is also a source of happiness over and above marriage and careers, thus promoting positive wellbeing. Therefore, understanding the impact of the current extended launching stage of parenthood on parental wellbeing could have implications for identifying factors that impact their future emotional health. Finally, at the macro level, prevailing dispositions toward parenthood and its impact on parents' wellbeing could have implications for society. For example, McLanahan and Adams (1986) suggest that how society, specifically potential parents, balances the costs of parenthood versus its rewards could affect fertility rates, making voluntary childlessness an increasingly viable option.

In summary, the aim of this exploratory study is to investigate the consequences of the extended launching stage to parents from a historical perspective. Cohort comparisons focus on late-phase launching as parents exit the launching stage and enter the empty nest stage in 1985 and in 2005. It is hypothesized that compared with parents in 1985, parents in 2005 will provide more support and will report greater closeness in the parent-child relationship. Despite these differences, no change is expected in parent emotional wellbeing.

Figure 2.1, the conceptual model of this study, illustrates the relationship between parent support and the parent-child relationship, indicating that these factors impact wellbeing. The model also represents the two cohorts that are examined in this study. The section that follows reviews classic and recent empirical studies relative to the effect of parent support, and the quality of the parent-child relationship on parent emotional wellbeing.

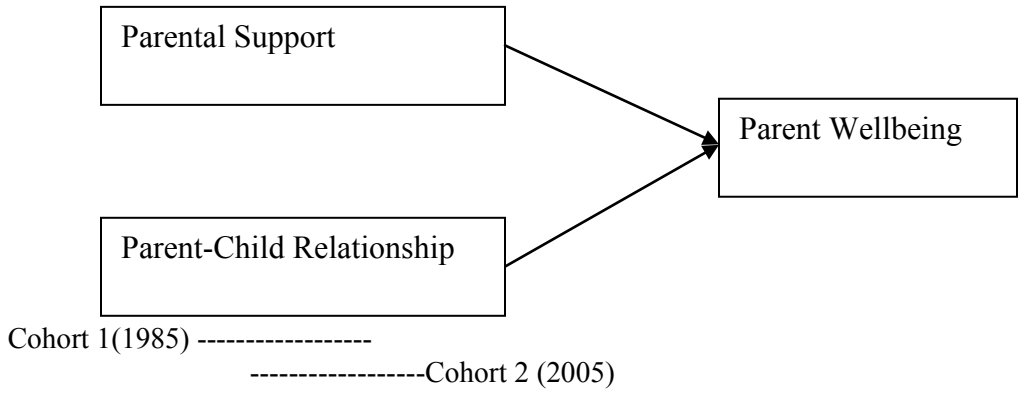

Figure 2.1 Chapter Two Conceptual Model of Parent Wellbeing

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on classic and current research related to the launching stage. The review includes: Research on the launching stage from a historical perspective, studies that elucidate the importance of the quality of the parent-child relationship to parental wellbeing, and studies on parent support of young adult offspring.

Historical perspective

Viewing the launching stage through a historical lens is helpful because of the tendency to see the present day extended launching stage as a major change from the past when the transition to adulthood was thought to be more straightforward and orderly (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Modell et al., 1976). However, family demographers find that if we define the launched parent as one whose children are no longer economically dependent and who have also established their own households, then, historically, there is considerable variation in when these events have occurred (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Mitchell, 2006). The length or duration of the launching stage has been flexible, meaning that it has fluctuated with economic and social conditions (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Modell, et al., 1976). For example, the patterns of home-leaving in the early 1900s and the 1980s are similar, but for different reasons (Furstenberg, Jr. 2010). In the early 1900s, young people stayed home longer to contribute financially to the family, while in the 1980s young people remained home because they needed family support longer due to poor economic conditions.

Despite these studies, the literature focused specifically on the launching stage within the context of historical time and space is sparse. Traditionally, it seems that scholars interested in parenthood stage research skipped the launching stage. This suggests that because launching was a short period it was easily absorbed into either adolescence or empty nest stage empirical work (Fingerman, Pillemer, Silverstein, Suitor, 2012; Gullette, 2002; Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002; Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995; Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009; Pillemer & Suitor, 1991; Pillemer & Suitor, 2002; Rossi, 1968; Smith, Hamon, Ingoldsby, & Miller, 2009; Spence & Lonner, 1971; Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010). As a result, little is known from the past about the experiences of launching parents.

Studies that do highlight the launching stage from a historical perspective do so by identifying trends in the launching process (Furstenberg, 2008; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Modell et al., 1976). These studies focus on economic conditions that alter the pace of the transition to adulthood.

This research compares the pace of offspring's attainment of adult status goals with earlier cohorts, identifies economic trends contributing to pace, and compares historical time and place—specifically Western cultures (Furstenberg, 2008; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Mitchell, 2006; Modell et al., 1976). In contrast, the major interest of present day research is in coresiding parents and young adult offspring, focusing on its effect on parental wellbeing (Boyd & Pryor, 1989; Craig, Powell, & Brown, 2014; Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995; Mitchell & Gee, 1996; Mitchell, 2004; Tang, 1997). Finally, research describing the value of children within a historical context of economic and social conditions is relevant to this study for explaining possible differences in the rewards and expectations of parent cohorts that may affect parental wellbeing (Modell et al., 1976; Zelizer, 1985). To illustrate, at one time in the United States, children had considerable economic value, contributing to the family as they worked the land alongside adults and labored in factories (Effland, 2005; McLanahan & Adams, 1986). While children's economic value was not their only benefit, their ability to contribute to the household income did function as an objective measure of successful childrearing (Zelizer, 1985). Using this yardstick parents could judge if parental investments were worthwhile. However, changes from an agrarian and industrial economic base, along with the introduction of child labor laws helped to restrict child financial contributions. Currently there is little research on the economic benefits of children in the United States; the most recent studies related to the value of children are cross-cultural studies focusing on fertility rates and economic benefits (Alwin, 1989; Aycicegi-Dinn, & Kagitcibasi, 2010; Sam, Amponsah, & Hetland, 2008). The lack of empirical interest in this subject seems to support the position of the present study, which is that as children's economic value decreased the emotional and psychological value of parenthood increased.

No longer relying on their economic aid, parents in the recent past experienced vicarious satisfaction primarily from offspring's attainment of adult status goals and the quality or closeness of the parent-child relationship (Fingerman, Cheng, Birditt, & Zarit, 2012; Greenfield & Marks, 2006; McLanahan & Adams, 1986; Pudrovska, 2009). These studies indicate that of

the two, the quality of the relationship between parents and children has been an important, but perhaps secondary, benefit or reward of parenthood (Milkie et al., 2008; Umberson, 1989; Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010).

From the literature, it is clear that both child achievement of adult status goals and the quality of the parent-child relationship are tied to parent wellbeing. However, it is not clear if the extended parent support that Furstenberg, Jr. (2010) described as resulting from delays in reaching adult goals has been balanced by an increase in the importance of the parent-child relationship. If so, as contemporary launching parents adjust to present day realities, they may also modify their expectations, which could result in a sense of wellbeing not too different from that of their parents.

Emotional wellbeing

It is empirically well established that the quality of the parent-child relationship greatly impacts parental wellbeing (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Christensen, Evans, & Carroll, 2011; Ryff, Lee, Essex, & Schmutte, 1994). However, the literature does not address historical and cohort effects. Both shared values between parents and offspring, and closeness in the parent-child relationship effect parental wellbeing. Therefore, it is possible to find cohort differences by examining this association. For example, Alwin (1989) found that since the 1960s there has been a significant change in qualities parents value in children, with less emphasis placed on obedience and conformity. This work points to the importance of increased years of schooling for influencing more liberal ideas. Similar educational attainments along with similar values are associated with greater parent-child relationship closeness (Pillemer & Suitor, 2002). Taken together, in terms of their educational attainment, parents launching in the 1970s and early 1980s may not be similar to their offspring. Furthermore, given the historical time when they were reared (the 1930s and 1940s), they may not hold similar values. Given similar parent-child educational levels and social values, the literature suggests that 2005 parent-child relationships are more likely to be closer. For both cohorts, studies find that there are

psychological rewards for parenthood (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; McLanahan & Adams, 1986; Umberson & Gove, 1989).

Parent Support

The extended launching stage has had the effect of increasing the length of time parents spend in active parenting, that is, in providing support for important aspects of their children's lives. The assistance parents provide during the launching stage includes financial, emotional, and advice support (Fingerman et al., 2012; Goldscheider, Thornton, & Yang, 2001; Hartnett, Furstenberg, Birditt, & Fingerman, 2013; Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2002). By all accounts, this prolonged support is a departure from the experiences of parents who launched children in the 1970s. However, existing research does not address whether there exist cohort differences in the support parents provide or in their wellbeing.

However, the literature indicates that gradually decreasing parental support while transferring all types of responsibilities to children is a major objective of parents in the launching stage (Fingerman et al., 2012; Harnett et al., 2013; Young, Marshall, Domene, Graham, Logan, Zaidman-Zait, Mart, & Lee, 2008). The impact of providing support on parental wellbeing may depend upon parents' perceptions. For example, assistance that is based on children's needs is considered normative when it is provided to help children transition into adulthood (Fingerman, Miller, Birditt, & Zarit, 2009; Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer, & O'Brien, 2011). This type of assistance is typically occurs early in the launching stage with support declining as children age (Goldscheider et al., 2001; Harnett et al., 2013). Studies find that parents look forward to the empty nest stage when they no longer have day-to-day responsibility for the children (DeVries, Kerrick, & Oetinger, 2007; Fingerman et al., 2012; Gullette, 2002). In contrast, other researchers report that for mothers, emotional support—giving advice, providing guidance, and enjoying each other's company—were aspects of parenthood that were rewarding and need never cease (Dillaway, 2006; Francis-Connolly, 2000). Taken together, it seems that parents are highly motivated to transfer governance for their own benefit as well as that of their offspring. And even

when taking into account normative support, parents' coming-of-age experience, and present-day economic and social conditions, there is an unspecified deadline for when assistance is either too much or has gone on too long (Fingerman et al., 2012; Harnett et al, 2013). For example, research finds that 'helicopter parents', a newly coined term, recognize and are uncomfortable with intense support (Fingerman et al., 2012). Therefore, despite the lack of direct empirical investigation, we can expect that prolonged support will have a negative effect on parental wellbeing.

In summary, despite the body of literature identifying factors that are associated with parental wellbeing, there are gaps in our understanding of the unique experiences of parents in the current extended launching stage, which result from their offspring's prolonged transition to adulthood. Therefore, situating parents' experiences in their historical context contributes to understanding the current importance of the parent-child relationship, parent support, and offspring attainment of traditional adult goals as factors impacting parental wellbeing. The following section discusses the life course perspective as it frames this study.

Theory

The life course perspective is the theoretical approach used in this study. The life course approach highlights change as a major outcome of the launching stage and young adult transition to adulthood. This outcome is critical because "changing lives alter developmental trajectories" (Elder, 1998, p.1). The life course perspective grounds our understanding of the effect of the extended launching stage on parent wellbeing with the following principles: (a) the current historical context, (b) intertwined parent and child trajectories, and (c) the adaptability of families.

Historical time and place

Our understanding of the importance of sociocultural context comes from the historical time and place principle of life course theory. The principle states that individual and familial trajectories and behavior are influenced by the prevailing economic conditions and social mores

of the times in which they occur (Elder, 1998). Recent economic and social changes, e.g. poor economic conditions, later age of first marriage, and changes in workplace needs that have required extended training are forces that shape the transition to adulthood (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010). Because parents share the problems of offspring these forces also affect parental behavior and ultimately, parental wellbeing. The life course perspective predicts that periods of economic and social upheaval alter family relationships, changing the criteria by which parents gauge on-time and off-time behavior. The historical time and place principle also takes into consideration not only the exact year or series of years in which events take place, but also the influence of preceding years (Elder, 1994). In this study, the early 1970s and early to mid-2000s are similar in terms of economic downturns and great social change. However, a major difference in the two historical periods is that the decades preceding each were very different.

The decades leading up to the 1970s were economically prosperous. The fastest annual growth of the world economy was in 1964 (mean annual growth of 6.4%) (Tapia, 2013). Family life, too, was generally stable, which ironically, provided a safe foundation from which middle class young adults could rebel against parental values ("Decades of Change", 2008). In contrast, economically, the world economic growth rate dropped in the 1990s and early 2000s (Tapia, 2013). This accounts for why despite stagflation (a term describing the combination of a stagnant economy and inflation) and major cultural change, the transition to adulthood in the 1970s was less prolonged than would be expected (Modell et al., 1976).

In contrast to the 1970s, the decades leading up to the early 2000s were marked by rapid social change resulting in major changes in the timing of family transitions and family structure. For example, in the early 2000s, delayed home-leaving, cohabitation, delay of first marriages, and divorce became more prevalent (Mitchell, 2006). Given that parents and young adult offspring were philosophically similar; these changes may not have caused significant family friction.

Thus, the life course principle of historical time and place predicts that social norms that were common for parents launching Baby Boomers no longer applied when Baby Boomer were

themselves launching in the 2000s. Parents who began launching in the 1970s did so during the time period that came at the end of the 1950s, an era of family stability that was real, but short and which has become highly idealized (Mitchell, 2006). To use this era as the standard for how the transition to adulthood and its accompanying launching stage ought to progress ignores historical influences and places parents in the unenviable position of unequal comparisons. As a result, parents may question their competency, have expectations about deadlines for child self-sufficiency that no longer fit, or worry unnecessarily about the current timeline for child achievement of traditional adult status goals. Therefore, we expect that parental behavior and wellbeing to differ between 1985 and 2005 parent cohorts.

Linked Lives

The linked lives life course principle states that "lives are lived interdependently, and social and historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships" (Elder, 1998, p. 4). This principle illustrates the way that active parenting, in the form of parent support, is prolonged during the extended launching stage. Swartz et al., (2011) describe problem sharing between children and parents as scaffolding and safety nets. Scaffolding is support parents provide while children prepare for future solvency in specific ways. Scaffolding does not continue indefinitely. There comes a point when parent support becomes inappropriate to both parents and society (Goldscheider et al., 2001; Hartnett et al., 2013). The need for parent assistance after this point indicates that the child's achievement of adult status goals is off-time, not occurring according to schedule.

In addition to scaffolding, parents also act as safety a net, which refers to providing support to children during temporary setbacks such as unemployment or divorce. In the case of both scaffolding and safety nets, the lives of children impact the lives of parents, supporting the linked lives principle of the life course perspective. Along with influencing support, family life course transitions have been found to affect the quality of parent-child relationships (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998).

Human Agency

Parental response to extended active parenting is an example of the life course principle of human agency. Human agency explains that in the face of difficult or changing social circumstances individuals choose their response and actions (Elder, 1998). At the present time, parents in the launching stage have had to adapt to their offspring's longer transition to adulthood without the benefit of government assistance or social guidelines. Further, contemporary parents' coming-of-age experiences provide limited value as a pattern for launching young people given that for most parents it was a shorter process. Tangible representations of human agency are demonstrated in choices parents make to extend some aspects of active parenting, such as, providing housing support—either by co-residing or underwriting (being responsible for) away from home room and board expenses, paying for transportation in the form of buying or lending cars and paying for insurance, and paying for tuitions (Fingerman et al., 2009; Fingerman et al., 2012; Goldscheider et al., 2001; Harnett et al., 2013). Moreover, in the present study, human agency involves making psychological choices including reordering the importance of markers of parental success—offspring attainment of adult status goals and maintaining connectedness. Therefore, the principle of human agency explains: (a) parents act to support children beyond the legal requirement and (b) they may make psychological adjustments shifting the salience of markers of their success.

Given that contemporary parents (defined as parents in the early 2000s, in particular 2005) have a longer launching period than their parents (parents launching in the 1970s and 1980s), is the contemporary launching experience different from the earlier one? To answer this question, this study compares data from parents having recently launched in 2005 with those in 1985. Because its purpose is to discover the unknown, generating hypotheses is not always included in exploratory studies. However, based on theoretical and empirical factors, I do include them in this study. Therefore, the hypotheses of this study are constructed to answer the following questions: First, what are the demographic differences in parents in 1985 and 2005? Investigating

beyond surface demographic attributes the second set of questions compare parents in 2005 with those in 1985. These questions examine the major areas related to launching experiences and outcomes, asking: (a) Are there statistically significant differences in parental wellbeing, the level of parent support, and closeness between parents and offspring and (b) is there a statistical relationship between parent support and parental wellbeing, and closeness in the parent-child relationship and wellbeing?

The first purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics and experiences of parents and offspring in the launching stage within a historical context, distinguishing between parents and offspring in 1985 and 2005. The second purpose is to determine whether there are differences between parents in 1985 and 2005 in parental wellbeing and support, and parental wellbeing and closeness in the parent-child relationship.

The first purpose is framed by the following hypotheses which examine parent characteristics and experiences in 2005 and compares those results with parents in 1985.

H1: Parents in 2005 are less likely to be married than parents in 1985.

H2: Parents in 2005 are more likely to be college educated than parents in 1985.

H3: Parents in 2005 are more likely to have a higher income than parents in 1985.

H4: Parents in 2005 are more likely to be physically healthy than parents in 1985.

H5: Offspring in 2005 are less likely to be married than offspring in 1985.

H6: Offspring in 2005 are more likely to be living at home than offspring in 1985.

H7: Offspring in 2005 are less likely to be employed fulltime than offspring in 1985.

The second purpose is framed by the following hypotheses, which posits anticipated differences between wellbeing, closeness in the parent-child relationship, and support in 1985 and 2005.

H8: Parents in 1985 and in 2005 are likely to experience wellbeing equally.

H9: Parents in 2005 are likely to report greater closeness with their offspring than parents in 1985.

H10: Parents in 2005 are more likely to provide functional support to offspring than parents in 1985.

The life course perspective, then, offers explanations for the ways in which historical time, timing, linked lives, and human agency interact with the support of children and the parent-child relationship to influence emotional wellbeing.

Method

The method section describes the data, sample, items used for measurement and data analyses. The section also presents results of the analyses.

Data and Sample

This study uses data collected from the 1985 and 2005 waves of the University of Southern California's Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG). The initial study, began in 1971, used a multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure to survey families from a list of 840,000 members of a California Health Maintenance Organization in Los Angeles. The original sample included 2,044 individual respondents from 300 three generation families: grandparents in their sixties, children in their forties, and grandchildren ranging from 16 to 26. Mail back surveys were collected in 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. The sample is generally representative of White, working and middle income families with above high school education (Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012).

The LSOG provides comprehensive information about the impact of intergenerational relationships on individual family members' emotional wellbeing. Relevant to this study, the LSOG is an excellent data source for studying parents with similar attributes during different historical times. It includes relevant data about the demographic, emotional, and relational characteristics of parents having recently exited the launching stage. The present study investigates two parent cohorts: parents of offspring who were young adults in 1985 and 2005. These waves were selected because the respondents were parents of newly or recently launched offspring. Respondents selected for this study were parents who had at least one child in their

late 20s or early 30s, which locates them in the latter phases of the launching stage and in some cases, the early phase of the empty nest stage. The data set includes parents of a randomly selected "study child". The 1985 and 2005 data sets are cross-sectional. Thus, the final data set meets the aims of this study and consists of parent-child dyads (mother-child, father-child): 202 dyads in the 1985 cohort and 153 dyads in the 2005 cohort.

Measures

The dependent variable, wellbeing, was measured using the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (ABS), a two-dimensional model of psychological well-being, which measured positive and negative affects in two five item clusters (Kempen, 1992; Kim & Mueller, 2001). Participants were asked to respond yes or no if in the last week they felt the following: 1) particularly excited or interested in something, 2) so restless that you couldn't sit long in a chair, 3) proud because someone complimented you on something you had done, 4) very lonely or remote from other people, 5) pleased about having accomplished something, 6) bored, 7) on top of the world, 8) depressed or very unhappy, 9) that things were really going your way, and 10) upset because someone criticized you? The Cronbach alpha score was .50 and .44 in 1985 and 2005, respectively. Low reliability scores are consistent with scales comprised of dichotomous variables because the scores are not tau equivalent, meaning that scores may or may not be generalizable to the population under study (Raykov, Dimitrov, & Asparouhov, 2010). I did not apply the method used to correct low reliability because it is recommended for large samples (at least 1,000 participants). The convergent validity of the scale is good (Lewis, McCollam, & Joseph, 2000; Van Schuur & Kruijtbosch, 1995). Positive affect has values from 0.34 to 0.38 and negative affect values are from 0.33 to 0.38 (Schiaffino, 2003).

The independent variable, parental support, is a dichotomous variable. It was assessed from yes/no responses to whether parents provided help in four areas: information and advice, emotional support, financial support, and making important life decisions. These items were summed from 0 to 4, to indicate the number of areas in which help was provided, with 4 the

maximum number of areas. Cronbach's alpha was .61. The independent variable closeness, an ordinal variable, measured affective solidarity. It was constructed with five items: "how close do you feel is the relationship between you and your study child (or mother/father)", "how good is communication with your study child", "how well do you get along", "how well do you feel you understand your study child"; and "how well do you feel your (study) child understands you?". There were six response categories for these items ranging from 1-6, not at all close, well, etc. to a great deal. These items are rated from 1 to 6, with 6 indicating greater closeness. The maximum score was 30. Cronbach's alpha was .88 in 1985 and .92 in 2005. Conflict between parents and offspring was not tested because items measuring this construct were not available in the 1985 data.

Covariates. In this study several factors were also included that could influence the results of the analyses. For parents, these factors were age, marital status, and quality of marriage, income, education and physical health. Parents' marital status—divorced, step-parent, or never married, impacts housing support (Boyd & Pryor, 1989; Swartz et al., 2011). For offspring, goal attainment was assessed with yes/no responses to the following items: living at home, employed, and marital status. These items were selected because they represent traditional adult status markers (Modell et al., 1976). They were tested as single items. Age and sex of the child were also included. The proxy for the time variable was created as a dichotomous variable (0 = 1985, 1 = 2005).

Analyses

The method directing this study was the analysis of data in support of a descriptive research study. Descriptive research is distinct in its aim, which as an exploratory study, was to describe sample characteristics of parents in 1985 and 2005. In addition, descriptive research examines associations between dependent and independent variables, which in this study are wellbeing and support, and wellbeing and closeness. All analyses included mothers and fathers in 1985 and

2005. Tables presenting percentages were used to report sample descriptive characteristics. I used correlations to test the direction and strength of the relationships between parental wellbeing and parent support, and wellbeing and closeness. I used unpaired means t-tests to test for differences and statistical significance in wellbeing, support, and closeness between the 1985 and 2005 parents. I used regressions to test the effect of time on wellbeing.

Results

The first set of hypotheses was that there would be differences in the sample characteristics of parents. Table 2.1, which corresponds to hypotheses 1 through 4, presents the descriptive statistics for mothers and fathers responding in 1985 and 2005. Parents' age was a characteristic that was not included in the hypotheses, but is worth noting. In 2005, over 90% of parents (97.9% and 94.5% of mothers and fathers, respectively) were under 60 years old (mean age was 57) compared to just 38.5% of mothers and 61.3% of fathers in 1985 (mean age was 51). Despite trends reporting increased divorced rates, there was a slightly greater incidence of married mothers in 2005 than in 1985. However, parents in 2005 were less likely to rate their marriages as 'extremely happy' than parents in 1985. The results indicate that in contrast to the hypothesis that the income of parents in 2005 would be higher than in 1985, their income was lower after adjusting for inflation. As hypothesized, more parents in 2005 were college graduates than in 1985. These results reflect fewer fathers who attended technical or specialized schools and some college, but more who graduated from a four year institution. For mothers, there was increase in all levels of postsecondary education in 2005 over 1985, with a considerable increase in college graduates and those with advanced degrees. A greater percentage of parents in 2005 rated their physical health as 'poor' than in 1985. This result was surprising given the higher age of parents in 1985.

Table 2.1 *Sample Characteristics as a Percentage of 1985 and 2005 Parent (Mothers and Fathers) Cohorts*

Characteristics	1985		2005	
	Mothers (n = 122)	Fathers (n = 80)	Mothers (n = 94)	Fathers (n = 59)
Age				
Under 60	38.5	61.3	97.9	94.5
Marital Status	76.2	96.3	81.7	92.2
Marital Quality				
Not happy	5.2	6.3	5.9	3.1
Pretty happy	34	28.6	37.3	32.2
Very happy	60.8	65	54.9	58.9
Income				
Under $50,000	64.3	53.3	62.8	45.6
Education				
High school or less	39.4	21.5	14.9	8.5
Technical school	42.6	40.5	47.9	39.0
College	5.7	13.9	16.0	18.6
Graduate school	12.3	24.1	20.2	33.9
Health				
Excellent	47.5	32.9	24.6	38.8
Good	39.2	50.6	53.5	41.9
Poor	13.4	16.4	22	19.4

Note. Race was excluded in the descriptive statistics. It was not measured in 1985 and was 87% white in the 2005 sample. After adjusting for inflation, income in 2005 was $90,000 compared with income in 1985 of $50,000 (62.8% and 45.6% of mothers' and fathers' income, respectively).

Hypotheses 5 through 7 refer to the characteristics of offspring in 2005 and 1985. Table 2.2 presents the descriptive statistics for these offspring. It is worthwhile to note that a much higher percentage of study children were 30 and over in 1985 than in 2005 (98.8% and 62.8%, respectively); the average age was 33 in 1985 versus 30 in 2005. As hypothesized, compared to offspring in 1985, 2005 offspring were less likely to be married, were still living at home, and a greater percentage were not employed full-time.

Table 2.2 *Background Statistics of Children of 1985 and 2005 Parent Cohorts*

Characteristics	1985 (*n*=202)	2005 (*n*=153)
Age (30 and over)	98.8	62.8
Sex (female)	56.9	54.4
Marital Status (married)	70.8	45.3
Live at Home	1.4	10.2
Employment Status (fulltime)	80.7	59.5

In summary, although parents in 2005 were younger and better educated they did not seem to fare as well as their parents when they were approximately the same age. Fewer rated their marriages as 'extremely happy', their income was lower, and more rated their physical health as being 'poor'. Relative to offspring, taking into account the three year average difference in age, offspring in 2005 had not achieved traditional adult status goals—fewer were married, more lived at home, and fewer were employed fulltime.

Tables 2.3 and 2.4 summarize the correlations between the dependent, independent, and control variables for 1985 and 2005, respectively. Pearson product-moment correlations were run to determine the association between parental wellbeing and support. Correlations were also conducted testing the association between wellbeing and closeness in the parent-child relationship. In 1985, there was a small, negative correlation between wellbeing and the level of support, which was not statistically significant (R =.02, p = ns). These results were in the predicted direction, but not statistically significant. In comparison, in 2005, there was a small, statistically significant, negative correlation between wellbeing and support (R = .02, $p < .01$). In both 1985 and 2005, correlations between wellbeing and closeness were small and not statistically significant.

In terms of other statistically significant results, all associations were small, which indicates that these factors were only weakly related. Further evidence in support of this conclusion is that

all R scores were also small, which indicates the practical significance or the amount of variance explained by the associations was consistent with the weak statistical significance.

Table 2.3 *Correlations of Parent and Child Background Characteristics, Parent-child Closeness, Parent Support and Parental Wellbeing for 1985*

Variables	Marital Status	Marital Quality	Income	Education	Health	Close	Wellbeing	Support	Sex-c	Marital	Employed
Marital Status	1.00										
Marital Quality	.15	1.00									
Income	.25**	.06	1.00								
Education	.03	.01	.29**	1.00							
Health	-.19**	-.20**	-.20**	-.12	1.00						
Close	.20**	.12	.09	.04	-.16*	1.00					
Wellbeing	.21**	.11	-.09	-.03	.16*	.04	1.00				
Support	-.15	.06	.13	.17*	-.02	.19*	-.13	1.00			
Sex-c	-.08	-.14	-.17*	-.05	.10	.06	-.02	.06	1.00		
Marital	-.20**	-.16*	-.01	.05	.05	-.09	-.07	.08	-.07	1.00	
Employed	-.01	.17*	.03	-.01	-.10	.10	-.09	-.10	-.20**	-.04	1.00

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2.4 *Correlations of Parent and Child Background Characteristics, Parent-child Closeness, Parent Support and Parental Wellbeing for 2005*

Variables	Marital Status	Marital Quality	Income	Education	Health	Close	Wellbeing	Support	Sex-c	Marital	Employed
Marital Status	1.00										
Marital Quality	-.42**	1.00									
Income	.17**	.04	1.00								
Education	.04	-.15*	.27**	1.00							
Health	-.05	-.12*	-.14*	-.17**	1.00						
Close	-.06	.07	.05	.02	-.10	1.00					
Wellbeing	-.06	.08	.09	-.07	.10	-.08	1.00				
Support	.00	-.09	.10	.15**	-.01	.15**	-.15**	1.00			
Sex-c	.01	.00	.03	.00	-.10	-.06	.05	.07	1.00		
Marital Status	-.07	-.12	.10	.12*	-.03	-.14*	.08	.24**	.03	1.00	
Employed	-.02	-.01	-.04	.05	-.04	-.16**	.04	.01	.27**	.03	1.00

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypotheses 8 through 10 made predictions about differences in three experiences that are theoretically and empirically relevant to parents in the launching stage. Hypothesis 8 stated that related to wellbeing, parents in 2005 and in 1985 would not differ. Results show that mean wellbeing scores for 2005 (M = 14.52, SD = 1.73) was lower than the 1985 parental wellbeing score (15.15), a statistically significant mean difference of -.48, *CI* (-0.68 to 0.-29), t (307) = -4.92, $p < .00$. The results, therefore, do not support the hypothesis that there is no difference between parental wellbeing between parents in 2005 and in 1985.

Hypothesis 9 posited that parents in 2005 would be more likely to report higher levels of closeness in the parent-child relationship than parents in 1985. Results show that mean closeness scores for 2005 (M = 22.25, SD = 4.99) was lower than the 1985 closeness score of 23.50, a statistically significant mean difference of -1.75, *CI* (-2.30 to -1.20), t (314) = -6.22, $p < .00$. The results do not support the hypothesis of higher levels of closeness in 2005 in 1985.

Hypothesis 10 posited that parents in 2005 would be more likely to provide functional support (defined as provide transportation and other material needs, financial assistance, emotional support and help making major life decisions) than parents in 1985. Results show mean parent support score for 2005 (M =3.23, SD =1.75) was higher than the 1985 parent support score of 2.75, a statistically significant mean difference, 95% CI (0.28 to 0.67), $t(315) = 4.87$, $p < .00$. The results support the hypothesis that parents in 2005 provide higher levels of functional support than their parents provided in 1985.

Figures 2.1 illustrates the results of hypothesis testing for differences in 1985 and 2005 in parental wellbeing, closeness between parents and offspring and parent support. There are statistical differences in parental wellbeing, levels of closeness between parents and children, and parent support in 2005 and 1985. Nonetheless, these differences were as hypothesized for parent support only; compared to parents in 1985, parents in 2005 provide more support. The results did not support the expectation that there would be no difference in parental wellbeing, finding that it actually decreased between 1985 and 2005. Finally, related to closeness in the parent-child relationship, the results indicated that parents in 2005 did not feel as close to offspring as parents in 1985. Therefore, these results show that there are statistically significant differences in the launching experiences (parent support and closeness between parents and children) and outcomes (wellbeing) of parents in 2005 compared to parents in 1985. However, the differences were not as expected.

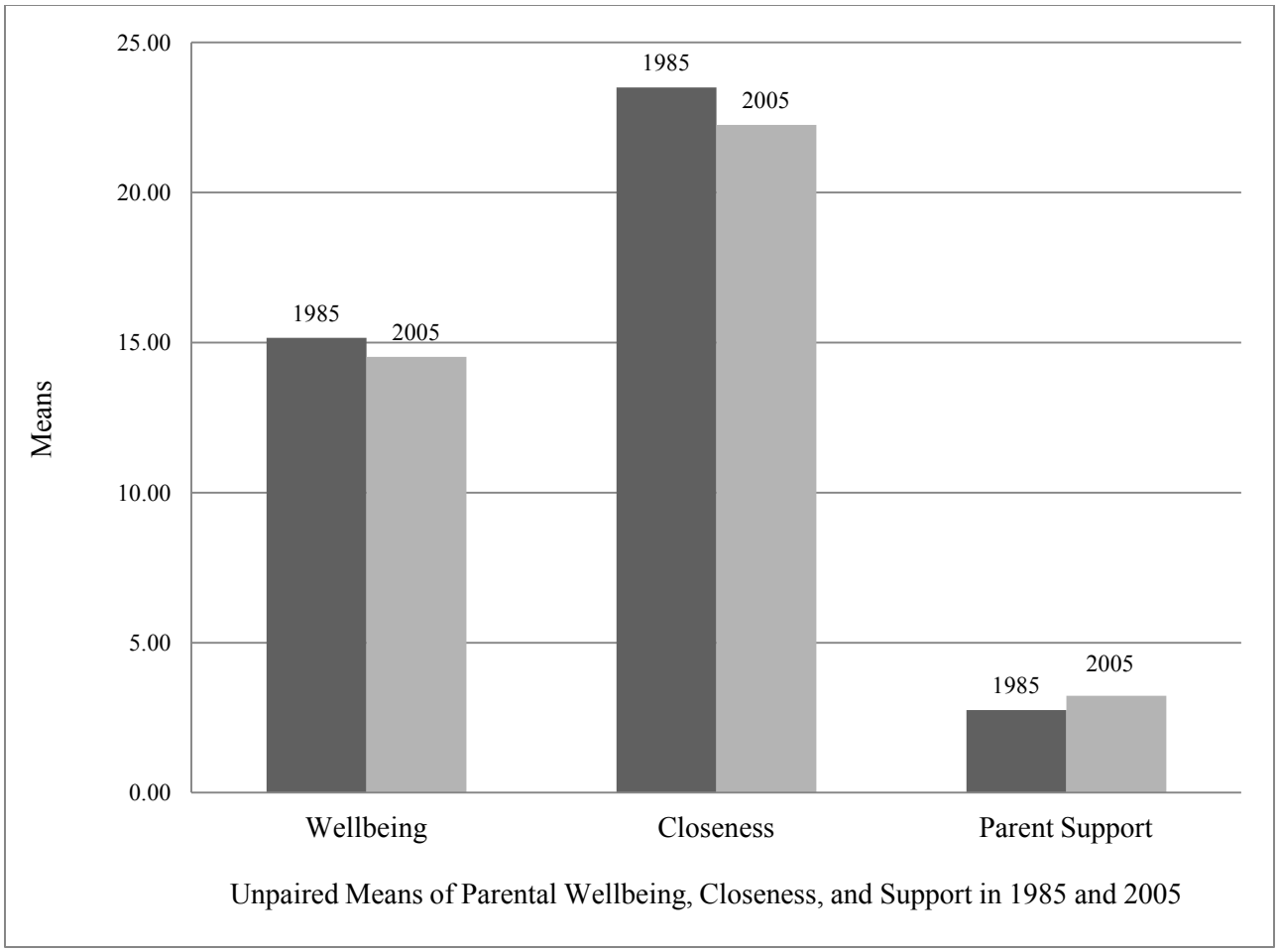

Figure 2.2 Unpaired Means of Parental Wellbeing, Closeness, and Support in 1985 and 2005

Regression analyses were conducted to test the relationship between the effects of time on parental wellbeing because regressions are statistically stronger than correlations and means tests. Table 2.5 presents regression results, indicating that there was a positive, statistically significant relationship between support and wellbeing. There was an increase in wellbeing for each one unit increase in support. The results also show a negative, statistically significant relationship between time and wellbeing. This result is a major finding, indicating a decrease in wellbeing between 1985 and 2005.

Table 2.5 *Regression Results of Time Predicting Emotional Wellbeing, Comparing 1985 and 2005*

Variable	B	SE	β
(Constant)	13.15***	2.58	
Close Relationship	.05	.07	.04
Support	.55**	.20	.17
Time (1985)	-7.79***	1.10	-.72
Parent			
Married	-.21	1.50	-.01
Marital Quality	-.19	.63	-.02
Education	-.33	.18	-.07
Income	-.25	.38	-.03
Offspring			
Sex	.07	.39	.01
Married	-.11	.09	-.05
Employed	.19	.12	.07
Adjusted R^2	.71		

***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$.

This descriptive study examined the characteristics and experiences of parents in the launching stage within a historical context. It is clear from the descriptive statistics that the demographic attributes of parents in 2005 are different from those of parents in 1985. Despite the younger age and higher educational level of 2005 parents, overall, the 1985 parents seemed to fare better relative to their marital satisfaction, income, and physical health. These analyses provided the background for comparative analyses, showing that experiences deemed to be important based on theoretical and empirical framing were also different between 2005 and 1985 parents. All correlations were small. In addition, the results indicate statistically significant mean differences for the parental wellbeing, parent support and closeness between 1985 and 2005. Regression results also support differences between the parent cohorts. The possible meaning of these results, the implications, and limitations will be discussed in the next section.

Discussion

The first purpose of this research was to describe the characteristics of parents and offspring within a historical context, distinguishing between parents in 1985 and 2005. The second purpose was to determine the relationship between wellbeing and closeness in the parent-child relationship, and wellbeing and parent support. Life course principles of historical time and place, linked lives, and human agency directed the selection of these factors. The results show that hypotheses were partially supported. This section includes discussion of the partially supported and unsupported hypotheses.

This study shows strong support for the hypothesis that parents in 2005 provide more support than do parents in 1985. This is consistent with research that finds that one consequence of prolonged launching is increased parent support (Fingerman et al., 2012; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010). Age of offspring was not a factor in determining support. This is difficult to interpret because prior research reports that age contributes to on-time considerations of whether support is appropriate and that at some indeterminate upper point support declines and ceases even when it is still needed (Fingerman et al., 2012). In this research, the average age of offspring was 30 in 2005, 33 in 1985. This raises the question: at what age is support unacceptable? It could be that, for parents in this study, need is more important than age in deciding to provide assistance, given that more offspring in 2005 still lived at home and were unemployed.

Although the 2005 parent cohort was predicted to provide more support, this was not expected to impact wellbeing or the parent-child relationship. Instead, the important but unexpected findings in this research were: (a) compared with their parents, the 2005 cohort had lower wellbeing; (b) they did not feel as close to their children and (c) the 2005 parent cohort's greater support was positively related to wellbeing. These results were counter to this research's hypotheses. First, I predicted that parents in 1985 and in 2005 would experience wellbeing equally. This prediction was based on my expectation that each cohort's historical context would determine the standard or basis for feeling good about the parental role. Therefore, the 1985

parent cohort's wellbeing would be derived from their offspring's attainment of traditional adult status goals. Alternately, the 2005 cohort's wellbeing would be based on the strength of the parent-child relationship. These expectations were consistent with empty nest research that links parental wellbeing and offspring achievement and the quality of the parent-child relationship (DeVries et al., 2007; Fingerman et al., 2012; Greenfield & Marks, 2006; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Pudrovska, 2009). However, the results of this study suggest that I overestimated the strength of 2005 parent cohort's parent-child relationship and therefore, its influence on parents' wellbeing. This explanation seems to be borne out with the finding that the 2005 parent cohort did not report feeling as close to offspring as their parents did to them. This result seems counter to prior research that finds greater closeness and wellbeing when parent-child educational attainment and values are similar (Pillemer & Suitor, 2002). Parents and offspring in 2005 share similar values, but this does not seem to translate into a sense of closeness or at least closeness that equals or exceeds that of the previous generation. I conclude that the older parent cohort enjoyed both the satisfaction that came from their offspring's attainment of traditional adult status goals and a close parent-child relationship. In contrast, the 2005 cohort did not experience the benefit of either, which suggests that the lack of closeness could account for lower wellbeing. Furthermore, the 2005 cohort in almost every way reported faring poorer than their parents (e.g. financially, marital satisfaction, and health). Perhaps, then, lower wellbeing and less relationship closeness fit the overall picture of lower quality of life for launching parents in 2005.

This study's finding that greater parent support is related to higher parent wellbeing is more difficult to understand. Prior research and common convention would predict the opposite: greater support would lead to lower wellbeing. Life course theory's linked lives and historical time and place principles offer possible explanations for this finding. First, from a historical perspective, in terms of prolonged support, in comparison with their parent cohort, 2005 parents are in sync and share camaraderie and normalcy. Second, this cohort most likely accepts support as the price for offspring's advanced educational pursuit. Finally, in terms of the linked lives

principle parents may take pride both in being in a position to provide support and in the reflected glory that they receive from offspring's anticipated educational achievements. This study provides an excellent initial platform for future research exploring the salience of the historical context on intergenerational transitions. Future research can test the effect of parent-child similarity on wellbeing and quality of the relationship.

Limitations

This research has limited external and measurement validity. It is not possible to generalize its findings because the dataset lacks socioeconomic, geographical, ethnic, and cultural diversity. In terms of measurement validity the quality of the parent-child relationship construct was limited to closeness only. This was because items related to conflict were not available in the 1985 dataset. Therefore, it is not known how the parent-child relationship would compare in terms of conflict in 1985 and 2005.

Implications

Although this research is exploratory, it is clear that contemporary parents are struggling more than their parents as they launch young adult offspring. They provide more support for longer, feel less close to offspring, and have lower wellbeing. We do not know the current and future implications of these results, but recognize that there are possible economic and health consequences. To illustrate, parents are providing greater support without corresponding greater resources. Furthermore, parents in this study rated their physical health poorer than their parents during the same family transitional period. Therefore, social policies need to be considered that undergird families during the launching stage.

Conclusion

The aim of this exploratory study was to investigate the meaning of the prolonged launching stage. This research asked, does the prolonged launching stage matter to parents' wellbeing? The answer is yes, it does matter. The historical perspective has been used to understand human development, particularly the development of young adults between adolescence and adulthood

(Arnett, 2007; Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Hendry and Kloep (2007) argue that the concept of emerging adulthood has limited value because it refers to a particular age-cohort coming-of-age during a particular historical time, during specific social conditions. In response, Arnett states that theories and development always vary according to historical time and place (Arnett, 2007). From this perspective, we can best understand the present-day prolonged launching stage in light of preceding launching stages. As a group, contemporary parents seem to be doing okay, but not when compared with their parents. The longer length of launching is taking a toll on the wellbeing and relationships of present day parents. This study indicates that there remains much to discover about factors that affect the wellbeing of parents in the launching stage of parenthood.

CHAPTER THREE: THE EFFECT OF PARENT SUPPORT AND OFFSPRING GOAL ACHIEVEMENT ON MATERNAL WELLBEING DURING THE LAUNCHING STAGE

The period between adolescence and the empty nest includes two family transitions: the young adult offspring transition to adulthood and the launching stage. In recent years, there has been much interest in this period, both empirically and in the popular culture. The interest stems from the extended length of time it currently takes to transition to adulthood compared to the transition in the recent past (Arnett, 2001, 2007). The empirical investigation of this phenomenon has largely focused on the experiences of young adults. In contrast, the focus of this study is on maternal wellbeing during the prolonged launching stage. The problem this research addresses is the growing, but still limited, body of knowledge about the impact of prolonged launching of young adult offspring on parental behavior and wellbeing, specifically as it is impacted by providing support (Fingerman, Miller, Birditt, & Zarit, 2009; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010).

The research described in this study contributes to the understanding of how parents, specifically mothers, experience the launching stage as a distinct period in parenthood. This study adds to parent development research, focusing on the link between intergenerational transitions and individual family members' wellbeing specific to the launching stage. In identifying the connection between sociocultural conditions that help to determine maternal behavior and wellbeing, it provides important insights into the information and programs that parents need to help bridge normative transitions. The study extends what is known about maternal wellbeing and support, providing a valuable platform for future research. Finally, the unique contribution of this study is that the longitudinal research design provides insight into how the launching stage develops and impacts parents over time.

The significance of this study lies in its recognition of the importance of the launching stage of parenthood. This stage may seem to be of little consequence in the development of offspring, coming as it does at the end of child rearing. However, the launching stage is critical to parents, offspring, senior family members, and society. For parents, the launching stage provides a rough measurement of their parenting performance to-date (DeVries, Kerrick, & Oetinger, 2007; Ryff, Lee, Essex, & Schmutte, 1994; Umberson, 1989). During this time, the ways in which parents and young adult offspring negotiate their relationship sets the tone for their future interactions (Young, Marshall, Domene, Graham, Logan, Zaidman-Zait, & Lee, 2008). In terms of parents and grandparents, the extended launching stage may have implications for the availability of resources (e.g. energy, time and money) to care for aging parents (Fingerman, Pillemer, Silverstein, & Suitor, 2012; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Hartnett, Furstenberg, Birditt, & Fingerman, 2013; Powell, Steelman, & Carini, 2006). Finally, understanding the incidence of and consequences of providing ongoing functional support during a period that society often considers to be post-parenting provides policy makers with information on how social policies, such as changes in Social Security, health care reform, and student loan policies, may impact middle generation parents who, for the most part, are still in the workforce and therefore, bear the brunt of such policies (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010). Therefore, this research helps to fill the gap in our understanding of how parents are affected by the extended launching stage, much as the transition to adulthood literature provides information about the experiences of their young adult offspring.

This research investigates maternal wellbeing and parent support without examining personal factors or elements external to the family contributing to these outcomes, such as depression or work satisfaction. Depression and work satisfaction could have a significant impact on parental wellbeing and levels of support, given their importance to parents' sense of efficacy (Evenson & Simon, 2005; McLanahan & Adams, 1986; Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010). Both of these topics could provide worthwhile areas for future research. Nonetheless, parental wellbeing and parent support are the focus of this study given that they seem most germane to the parent

role during the launching stage. Figure 3.1 illustrates the conceptual model of this study, showing that parent support and offspring attainment of adult status goals are hypothesized to have a direct impact on parental wellbeing. The time line illustrates the longitudinal design of this research, showing four data collection points.

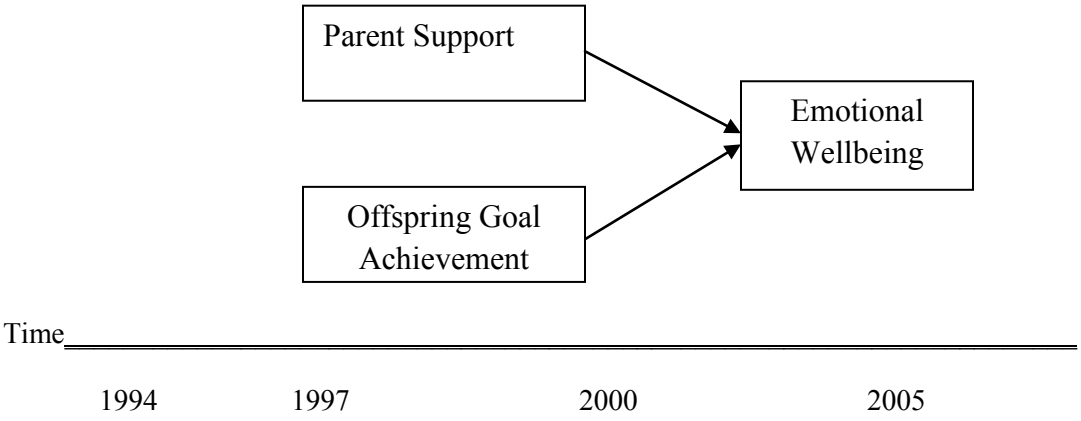

Figure 3.1 Chapter Three Conceptual Model

The sections that follow include a literature review, the theoretical background grounding this research, methods, and discussion of the results of the research. The conclusion describes the limitations and implications of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on research investigating parental support of children as they transition to adulthood (Fingerman et al., 2012; Goldscheider, Thornton, & Yang, 2001; Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer, & O'Brien, 2011). The review describes (a) the history of support, establishing that it continues beyond adolescence (Modell, Furstenberg, & Hershberg, 1976; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Sironi & Furstenberg, 2012), (b) types of support (Boyd & Pryor, 1989; Swartz et al., 2011), (c) reasons for support (Fingerman et al., 2009; Furstenberg, 2008; Harnett et al., 2013) and (d) timing as it impacts parental wellbeing.

Historical Perspective of the Launching Stage

The popular perception is that the current extended transition to adulthood, particularly young people's continued dependence on parents, is a new phenomenon (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Modell et al., 1976). More accurately, demographers studying family transitions find that the present day transition to adulthood, while admittedly lasting longer, follows a cyclic pattern that primarily fluctuates with economic conditions. In the 1800s, when most families relied upon a farming economy, young people remained at home until they inherited family land (Boyd & Pryor, 1989; Modell et al., 1976; Modell, Furstenberg, Jr., & Strong, 1978; Furstenberg, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2005). In postwar (World War II) United States, jobs were plentiful and young people left home in their late teens or early twenties to establish their own households. In the 1960s, several social changes, including job market needs, emerged that made early self-sufficiency more challenging and delayed attainment of adult status goals. During the 1970s, the spread, defined as the amount of time it takes for a cohort to enter and exit the transition to adulthood, was relatively brief, resulting again in a decline in the numbers of young people living at home post-high school (Sironi & Furstenberg, 2012; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010). Since that time, there have been varying degrees of economic stability and upheaval, and families who are launching young people adjust to each change either extending or decreasing support. When examined within a sociohistorical context, it is clear that parents adapt, providing support not only on the basis of age-based norms, but on the needs of young people. Therefore, although the transition to adulthood is extended, parental response to the perceived and actual needs of their young adult offspring is consistent with previous patterns.

Types of Support

Studies describe the types of contributions parents make during the launching stage as emotional and social support (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010) and economic assistance (Furstenberg, Jr., et al., 2005; Modell et al., 1976). Examples of support include financial assistance, transportation, help with day-to-day household chores, and advice giving. Financial support is

the most widely researched (Goldscheider et al., 2001; Hartnett et al., 2013; Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2002). According to Schoeni and Ross (2005), during the launching stage (between the ages of 18-34), parents contribute, on average, $38,000, approximately $2200 a year (Furstenberg, et al., 2005; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Harnett et al., 2013). Young people in the United States have very little institutional support, relying almost entirely on resources provided on their own or by their families (Modell et al., 1976; Furstenberg, 2008, 2010). Studies examining socioeconomic predictors of parental support find that advantaged and disadvantaged families proportionately provide equal levels of support (Furstenberg, 2008). However, there exists a gap between these groups because advantaged young people can afford to take more time for schooling and participate in unpaid opportunities, such as internships and volunteer work that provide future career and employment benefits (Flanagan, Osgood, Foster, & Cusick, 2008; Furstenberg, 2008).

Parental support can be framed as scaffolding and safety nets. Scaffolding is defined as providing temporary assistance—such as financial help, insurance, and housing, while children prepare for the future in specific ways (Swartz et al., 2011). Postsecondary schooling is the most common pursuit of young people that precipitates this type of support (Fingerman et al., 2009; Furstenberg, 2008, 2010; Goldscheider et al., 2001). Providing a safety net is described as temporary assistance that is given when children experience setbacks, for example, job loss or divorce.

Nonetheless, while parents anticipate that children need help becoming autonomous, they also expect there to be an endpoint to their active involvement (Harnett, et al., 2013). For example, these authors find that parental financial support follows a pattern of steady decline across the launching stage. These authors link financial support with the age of the child, finding that support eventually decreases despite continued need. Other scholars show a similar pattern, suggesting that even when support fluctuates—more during some periods, less in others, there are age-related norms governing on-time parental assistance (Goldscheider et al., 2001; Swartz et al.,

2011). On-time here refers to the expected duration of parental support. Together these studies find that decreased parental support is a normative expectation during the transition from active childrearing to supportive parenting.

Motivations for Support

Research examining parents' reasons for supporting children after high school find that parents have a vested interest in how children turn out (DeVries et al., 2007; Fingerman et al., 2012; Fingerman, Cheng, Birditt, & Zarit, 2012; Francis-Connolly, 2000), that they consider the support to be temporary (Francis-Connolly, 2000; Swartz et al., 2011), and that they anticipate reciprocity in their old age (Harnett et al., 2013; Silverstein et al., 2002). For the purposes of this study, this review is limited to interest in children's successes and failures and the temporary nature of assistance as these may have a direct bearing on parental wellbeing. Several studies report that parents gauge their success as parents by how well their adult children function on their own, e.g. their financial independence and personal happiness (DeVries et al., 2007; Fingerman et al., 2012; Francis-Connolly, 2000; Schoeni & Ross, 2005). The literature establishes that currently, as well as historically, parents are strongly motivated to continue to support young adult offspring in response to need. Such support is seen as facilitating independence and therefore, is temporary (Harnett et al., 2013; Swartz et al., 2011).

Adult Status Goals. Current literature on the transition to adulthood typically focuses on how long it now takes to attain traditional adult status goals. As previously stated, the five goals that are most identified as societal indicators of adult status are: completed schooling, employment, leaving home, marriage, and establishing one's own household. Modell et al., (1976) groups these goals into two categories: non-familial (completed schooling and employment) and familial (leaving home, marriage, and establishing one's own household). Challenges in attaining non-familial goals are posited as impacting the delay in achieving familial goals, but not entirely (Modell et al., 1976). Researchers generally agree that a weak economy, as well as, major societal changes, such as liberalized sexual mores, is a prime reason for the delay

in achieving both traditional familial and non-familial adult status goals (Furstenberg, 2010; Goldscheider et al., 2001; Hartnett et al., 2013; Swartz et al., 2011).

In this study, the prolonged launching state is thought to have consequences for how parents transfer responsibility for day-to-day upkeep to young adult offspring, which could negatively affect parental wellbeing. Transferring responsibility is bidirectional. This means that it is a joint process between parents and children, whereby, as offspring demonstrate increased capacity to function independently, parents decrease support (Young et al., 2008). The research on the young adult transition to adulthood finds that traditional goals are not the major criteria contemporary young adults use to determine adult status (Arnett, 2001). Rather, according to Arnett, the preferred criteria are developing a peer-like relationship with parents and maintaining freedom from obligations associated with adult roles. In contrast, traditional status goals remain important to parents (Fingerman et al., 2012). Delays in their attainment could have implications for the level of support parents provide as well as their emotional wellbeing. Delays may also instigate change in social norms for the timetable for young adult independence.

Timing

Social timetables refer to the generally agreed upon time for when family transitions should occur. Transitions that occur earlier or later than expected are off-time (DeVries et al., 2007; Umberson et al., 2010). Whether timing is early or late can only be assessed relative to previous cohorts (Modell et al., 1978). On the basis of this distinction, present delays in reaching adult status roles are off-time, as many parents were younger when they attained these roles.

The importance of timing is that normative social timetables both create and are created by collective social expectations. That is, society, through norms, provides informal guidelines for when young people should leave the natal home and achieve financial independence, but families can and do change standards for timing by their practices (Fingerman et al., 2009; Fingerman et al., 2012). These authors find that along with impacting individual families, societal expectations also influence public policy decisions about the types of supports families should provide.

However, these generally lag behind social changes so that social policies relative to coming-of-age that were once applicable to most families may no longer be relevant. For example, an unanticipated effect of the availability of Social Security benefits has been that family resources that were once designated for elderly family members are now used to support the needs of young people. When parents are faced with having to choose between generations, typically young people win out over the older generation as their needs are perceived to be greater (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010). Thus, changes in Social Security benefits may have intergenerational repercussions for families who have adjusted to the prolonged launching stage by allocating resources to younger family members for longer periods of time.

Moreover, the extended launching stage, with its prolonged active phase, could have long-term implications in terms of reduced fertility rates. Scholars query whether potential parents will choose childlessness rather than parenthood in response to the long-term economic responsibilities associated with childrearing (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; McLanahan & Adams, 1986). Lower fertility rates, in turn, may result in fewer participants in the workforce, creating complications in providing for both older and younger family members (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010).

Summary

The research documents that young people need help to become self-sufficient adults (Danziger & Rouse, 2008; Flanagan, et al., 2008; Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Roy, Veseley, Buckmiller, & Fitzgerald, 2008). This need is greatest in the late teens and early twenties, after which we can expect parental wellbeing to suffer, in terms of unmet expectations and violated social timetables. Although the current literature relative to parent support and offspring attainment of adult goals is comprehensive, most studies are cross-sectional. A notable exception is research conducted by Swartz et al., (2011), which used a longitudinal design to study parent support over the course of the launching stage. Moreover, with the exception of Young et al., (2008), which is concerned with governance transfer, research typically investigates the bidirectional effect of parent support and adult goals. In addition, while there are studies that

discuss social timetables in the context of the prolonged transition to adulthood, there are gaps in our knowledge about how these topics intersect to create the experiences of contemporary parents in the launching stage. Therefore, building on previous research findings that parent support decreases over time, this study contributes to the literature by examining the affect of parent support on parent wellbeing over the course of the launching stage.

Theory

This study uses the life course perspective to understand the relationship between support, adult status goals, and parent emotional wellbeing. In terms of parents and offspring, the linked lives principle refers to the interdependent nature of individual family members over their life course (Elder, Jr., 1985, 1994; Greenfield & Marks, 2006). In this research, the economic decisions and setbacks of young people are conceptualized as shared problems, impacting parents by making demands on their resources (Swartz et al., 2011). Further, there are psychological implications associated with interdependency. Studies find that parents' own sense of pride or failure is linked to the successes and failures of adult children, resulting in either satisfaction or depression (Elder, Jr., 1994; Fingerman et al., 2012; Umberson et al., 2010).

The life course principle of timing refers to the social meanings of age, including expectations and beliefs about when major life events should take place (Elder, Jr., 1994). Relative to mothers in the launching stage, the personal impact of providing support and children's progress in achieving goals could depend on maternal expectations about how this process should unfold. As with all other parenthood stages, parenting goals in the launching stage are tied to optimizing the development of children. Parent support in the early years of the transition to adulthood is consistent with the normative expectation that up to an undefined point young people need support, beyond which continued assistance becomes a violation of the expectation that they will become independent (Settersten, 1998; Swartz et al., 2011). Therefore, the linked lives and timing principles guide my examination of the influence of parent support and offspring's

progress in attaining adult status goals on parental wellbeing over the course of the launching stage.

This study has two research purposes, which are tied to the research questions. Given that the lives of parents and young adult offspring are linked such that mothers, children, and society redefine the appropriateness of functional support as children get older, purpose one is to examine the relationship between parent support, offspring attainment of adult status goals, and parental wellbeing by asking the following questions: (a) Does parent support predict maternal wellbeing and (b) does offspring attainment of adult status goals predict maternal wellbeing? Purpose two is to investigate the effect of these relationships over time, examining changes in maternal wellbeing at four data collection points, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005 asking: Does maternal wellbeing change over time?

Research purpose one is supported by the following hypotheses, which examine the relationship between wellbeing and support, and wellbeing and goal attainment. Hypotheses 1 through 4 make predictions about the relationship between parent support and maternal wellbeing. Hypotheses five through eight make predictions about adult status goals and maternal wellbeing.

H1: In 1994 maternal support does not predict maternal wellbeing.

H2: In 1997 maternal support does not predict maternal wellbeing.

H3: In 2000 maternal support does not predict maternal wellbeing.

H4: In 2005 maternal support negatively predicts maternal wellbeing, as parent support decreases, maternal wellbeing increases.

H5: No prediction is made concerning offspring's marital status and maternal wellbeing.

H6: Offspring school attendance is positively related to maternal wellbeing at each data collection time (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005).

H7: Offspring living away from home is positively related to maternal wellbeing at each data collection time (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005).

H8: Offspring employed full-time is positively related to maternal wellbeing at each data collection time (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005).

The second of hypotheses uses a longitudinal research design to determine causation between changes in maternal support and maternal wellbeing. Changes in child adult status goal attainment and wellbeing are also examined.

H9: Decreased support positively predicts change in maternal wellbeing (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005).

H10: Increased goal attainment positively predicts change in maternal wellbeing over time (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005).

Method

There are two purposes for this section. The first is to describe the characteristics of mothers and study children who were respondents in this study. The second purpose is to determine the relationship between maternal wellbeing and maternal support in 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. I also examine the relationship between offspring attainment of adult status goals and maternal wellbeing in 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. The section includes descriptions of the data, sample, measurement items, analyses, and results.

Data and Sample

This research used data from the Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG). The LSOG began in 1971 with a survey study of 2044 individuals from 300 three-generation California families (Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012). Eligible grandparents were selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure from the 840,000 membership list of a California Health Maintenance Organization in Los Angeles. The original study participants were first surveyed when grandparents were in their sixties, their children in their forties, and grandchildren aged 15 to 26. Mail-back surveys were conducted in 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. The fourth generation was added in 1991—198 great-grandchildren of the

initial group. The sample is generally representative of White, middle income families with above high school education (Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012).

The LSOG provides information on the impact of intergenerational relationships on adult family members' well-being over the life course (Bengtson & Allen, 2009; Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012). The research data were well suited for the purposes of this study because waves 1994-2005 cover the launching stage period of parents of the youngest generation. The data set provided relevant information about both generations of interest, including information about several facets of parent support, a widely accepted index measuring parental emotional wellbeing, and items measuring traditional adult status goals. Respondents were selected who were members of family groups that included mother-child dyads and who responded in at least two consecutive time waves of the four data collection points included in the study (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005). The sample, including incomplete cases, included mother-child dyads: 123 in 1994, 101 in 1997, 100 in 2000, and 94 in 2005.

Measures

Parental emotional wellbeing, a dichotomous variable, was measured with the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale (ABS). The scale consisted of 10 items (5 positive and 5 negative), which measure one's immediate or short-term emotional state. Participants were asked to respond yes or no to if in the last week they felt, for example, either on top of the world or upset because someone criticized you. The Cronbach's alpha scores were low, .58 (1994), .39 (1997), .59 (2000), and .57 (2005). When items are dichotomous, the alpha coefficients can be low, underestimating the reliability scale (Raykov, Dimitrov, & Asparouhov, 2010). The method for estimating the reliability of dichotomous scales was not used in this study because the method is recommended for large samples (e.g. 1,000 participant samples and larger). Studies utilizing the method report Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from .69 to .87. The validity of the scale has been tested, finding that positive and negative items measure distinct psychological dimensions. The items

have also been found to be independent (Lewis, McCollam, & Joseph, 2000; Schiaffino, 2003; Van Schuur & Kruijtbosch, 1995). The additive scores ranged from 0 to 10.

Parent support, an independent variable, was the sum of five dichotomous items: transportation/shopping, information and advice, financial advice, emotional support, and discussing important life decisions. Although transportation/shopping was not specified, it could include paying for or providing the use of vehicles, providing insurance, or purchasing large items for setting up households, such as furniture. Cronbach's alpha scores for this scale were .68 (1994), .79 (1997), .75 (2000), and .71 (2005). The range of the total scale score was 0-5.

Adult status goals were assessed with yes/no responses to the following items: marital status, school attendance, living away from home, and employment. These variables were selected because they represent traditional adult status markers (Modell et al., 1976). Attempts to create a scale using these items resulted in a negative reliability score; therefore, they were tested as single items.

Age, marital status, marital quality, income, educational level, and physical health of parents, and sex and age of the child could confound the relationships between parental wellbeing and support, and wellbeing and goal attainment. These variables were controlled for in the analyses.

Analyses

I conducted descriptive analyses for cross-sectional regressions and longitudinal analyses with mothers responding in at least two consecutive time waves. Although it was possible to conduct cross-sectional analyses with mothers who responded in any year, using the same data set for cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses allowed me to directly compare mothers at a specific time and over time. Descriptive analyses included statistics of sample characteristics, correlations of the dependent, independent, and control variables and unpaired means test of the dependent and independent variables. I conducted these analyses for four time waves (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005).

I conducted cross-sectional ordinary least square (OLS) regression analyses with mothers to evaluate the relationship between wellbeing and parent support for each time wave (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005). I also conducted regression analyses to test the relationship between wellbeing and adult status goals for each time wave (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005). For regression analyses binary (dummy variables) were created for all ordinal control variables.

The research design included longitudinal analyses which used fixed effects models to estimate the impact of change in parent support and individual adult status goals on change in mothers' wellbeing for 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. The baseline value was used for time-invariant demographic control variables.

Results

The descriptive statistics of the characteristics of mothers and study children showed that most mothers were over 45 years old and very happily married (although fewer in each wave report being very happy). The mothers had above average educational levels and were economically prosperous. Health reports shifted across time, with fewer reporting excellent and good health in 2005 than in 1994. Offspring were predominantly female. Table 3.1 presents these results.

Table 3.1 *Sample Characteristics of Mothers across Four Time Waves*

Characteristics	1994 (*n* = 123)	1997 (*n*=101)	2000 (*n*=100)	2005 (*n*=94)
Parent				
Age				
Over 45	30.1	66.0	97.0	98.9
Sex (%)				
Female	68.0	64.0	62.9	61.4
Race (%)				
White	89.4	88.9	91.7	
Marital Status				
Married	86.2	77.2	85.0	85.1
Marital Quality				
Unhappy	21.1	21.8	17.0	19.1
Happy	22.8	23.8	32.0	29.8
Very Happy	56.1	54.5	51.0	50.0
Household Income (%)				
Under $40,000	46.3	30.7	24.0	13.8
$40,000-$79,000	25.2	36.6	34.0	20.2
$80,000 and over	28.5	32.7	39.0	44.7
Education (%)				
High School or less	18.7	17.8	15.0	14.9
Some College	48.8	50.5	47.0	47.9
College	29.3	28.7	34.0	35.1
Graduate School	1.6	2.0	3.0	1.1
Health				
Excellent	35.0	26.7	31.0	21.3
Good	62.0	55.4	49.0	56.4
Fair	25.0	17.8	20.0	22.3
Child				
Age (%) under 25	93.5	74.3	44.0	6.1
Sex				
Female	63.0	60.4	63.0	58.5

Note. Income is not adjusted for inflation due to unavailability of income amount. Categories not summing to 100% reflect missing data.

I ran Pearson product-moment correlations to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Tables 3.2 through 3.5 summarize the correlations between

parental wellbeing, parent support, and offspring attainment of adult status for 1994, 1997, 2000 and 2005. In 1994, there was a strong correlation between offspring being married and living on their own (R = .63, n = 123, p < .01). In 1997, there was a moderate, negative correlation between child's school attendance and being employed fulltime (R = -.54, n = 101, p <. 01). Correlations were weak for all other variables in all waves.

Table 3.2 *Correlations of Wellbeing and Independent Variables, 1994*

Variables	Wellbeing	Support	Married	School	Live on Own	Employed
Wellbeing	1.00					
Support	.11	1.00				
Married	-.03	-.25**	1.00			
School	-.08	.11	-.37**	1.00		
Live on Own	.08	-.27**	.63**	-.26**	1.00	
Employed	.07	.04	-.13	.29**	-.10	1.00

**p < .01.

Table 3.3 *Correlations of Wellbeing and Independent Variables, 1997*

Variables	Wellbeing	Support	Married	School	Live on Own	Employed
Wellbeing	1.00					
Support	-.03	1.00				
Married	.02	-.35**	1.00			
School	.11	.32**	-.32**	1.00		
Live on Own	-.01	-.35**	.37**	-.23*	1.00	
Employed	.01	-.37**	.25*	-.54**	.16	1.00

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 3.4 *Correlations of Wellbeing and Independent Variables, 2000*

Variables	Wellbeing	Support	Married	School	Live on Own	Employed
Wellbeing	1.00					
Support	-.02	1.00				
Married	-.17	.28**	1.00			
School	-.09	.13	-.13	1.00		
Live on Own	.03	-.36**	-.33**	-.11	1.00	
Employed	.24*	.07	-.32**	.16	.08	1.00

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$

Table 3.5 *Correlations of Wellbeing and Independent Variables, 2005*

Variables	Wellbeing	Support	Married	School	Live on Own	Employed
Wellbeing	1.00					
Support	.28**	1.00				
Married	-.11	.08	1.00			
School	.04	-.08	.06	1.00		
Live on Own	.10	-.12	-.26*	.08	1.00	
Employed	.12	-.01	-.08	-.21*	-.04	1.00

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$

Unpaired means t-tests of all dependent and independent variables were conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between these variables in 1994, 1997, 2000 and 2005. Table 3.6 presents the results of the analyses. Using 1994 grouped means as the baseline, the results show that there is no difference in parental wellbeing in 1997, 2000 and 2005. There are statistically significant differences in parent support in all years. Mean parent support scores for 1997 ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.34$) were lower than the 1994 baseline score of 2.69, a statistically significant mean difference, 95% CI (-.67 to -.14), $t(99) = -3.01$, $p < .001$. Mean parent scores for 2000 ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 1.24$) were also lower than the 1994 score and were also statistically significant, 95% CI (-1.02 to -.52), $t(99) = -6.23$, $p < .001$. The mean parent scores for 2005 ($M = 1.44$, $SD = 1.04$) were also lower than the 1994 score and were also statistically

significant, 95% CI (-1.47 to -1.04), $t(93) = -11.66$, $p < .001$. Marital status and living on one's own were statistically different in 1997, 2000 and 2005. The 1997 mean marital status scores ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 2.60$) were statistically higher than the 1994 mean of .20, 95% CI (4.59 to 5.62), $t(100) = 19.78$, $p < .001$. The 2000 mean marital status scores ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 2.73$) were statistically higher than the 1994 baseline score, 95% CI (3.39 to 4.47), $t(99) = 14.42$, $p < .001$. The 2005 mean marital status scores ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 2.50$) were also statistically higher than the 1994 baseline score, 95% CI (2.33 to 3.35), $t(93) = 11.04$, $p < .001$. The mean school attendance scores in 2005 ($M = .20$, $SD = .40$) were statistically lower than the 1994 mean score of .53, 95% CI (-.41 to -.25), $t(93) = -7.87$, $p < .001$. Mean 1997 living independently scores ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.20$) were statistically higher than the 1994 score of 1.75, 95% CI (.47 to .94), $t(101) = 5.93$, $p < .01$. Mean 2000 living independently scores ($M = 2.68$, $SD = .85$) were statistically higher than the 1994 score of 1.75, 95% CI (.76 to 1.10), $t(99) = 10.92$, $p < .01$. Mean 2005 living independently scores ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .49$) were also statistically higher than the 1994 score, 95% CI (1.07 to 1.28), $t(93) = 23.18$, $p < .001$. There was no difference in employment in 1997, 2000 and 2005. The mean differences results show that as expected, parent support decreased over time. School attendance also decreased over time, but this change is not statistically significant until 2005. As expected, living away from home increased over time, a statistically significant change. An interesting finding is that the grouped mean of married offspring decreased from 1997 to 2005. Worth noting is that there are not statistically significant differences in the means of parental wellbeing although they increased from 1994 to 2005. Also worth noting is that fulltime employment fluctuated from 1994 to 2005; these fluctuations were not statistically significant.

Table 3.6 *Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent and Independent Variables (1994, 1997, 2000, 2005)*

	1994		1997		2000		2005	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Wellbeing	2.69	1.14	5.71	1.61	5.67	2.96	5.82	2.97
Support	5.68	2.03	2.28**	1.34	1.92***	1.24	1.44***	1.04
Marital Status	.20	.41	5.31***	2.60	4.13***	2.73	3.04***	2.50
Attend School	.53	.50	.48	.50	.33	.47	.20***	.40
Live on Own	1.75	.99	2.46***	1.20	2.68***	.85	2.93***	.49
Employed	2.21	1.79	2.10	1.46	2.34	1.99	1.93	1.73

***$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$*

Cross-sectional regressions were conducted to test hypotheses 1 to 8, which made predictions about the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. Table 3.7 corresponds to hypotheses 1 through 4, which made predictions about the relationship between parent support and parental wellbeing. Hypotheses 1-3 (parent support does not predict wellbeing) were supported by cross-sectional regressions, which found that there was no statistically significant relationship between parent support and parental wellbeing in 1994, 1997 and 2000. In 2005, there was a positive, statistically significant relationship between parent support and parental wellbeing ($B = .82$, $p < .01$). This relationship, though significant, was not in the hypothesized direction.

Table 3.7 *Regression Results of Parent Support Predicting Mother's Emotional Wellbeing*

Variables	1994 (n = 123)			1997 (n = 100)			2000 (n = 100)			2005 (n = 93)		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
(Constant)	7.68	1.65		7.76*	1.36		9.59	4.62		4.28	1.13	
Parent Support	.27	.18	.12	.01	.13	.00	-.06	.29	-.03	.82**	.33	.28
Parents												
Age	-.77	.48	-.18	-.11	.41	-.03	-.30	1.92	-.02			
Race	-.35	.68	-.05	-.55	.53	-.11	-.88	1.17	-.08			
Marital Status	-1.00	.77	-.18	-.49	.59	-.13	-2.54	2.02	-.30	.01	.98	.01
Marital Quality												
Low happy	.13	.67	.03	-.85	.55	-.22	.09	1.95	.01	.10	.98	.01
Happy	.28	.24	.12	-.03	.21	-.02	.32	.37	.10	.60	.40	.19
Income												
Low income	.02	.50	.01	1.15	.47	.33	-1.60	.95	-.23	.66	1.01	.09
Middle income	.22	.27	.10	.58	.20	.35	-.45	.39	-.14	-.18	.40	-.05
Education												
High school	-.25	.59	-.05	-.94	.54	-.22	.14	1.08	.02	.76	1.01	.09
Some college	-.58	.47	-.15	-1.05	.43	-.32	.63	.76	.11	.87	.81	.15
Graduate	1.41	1.52	.09	.20	1.26	.02	.25	1.91	.01	-2.48	3.24	-.09
Health												
Excellent	-.15	.45	-.03	-.03	.40	-.01	-.62	.79	-.10	-1.11	1.04	-.15
Fair	-.40	.52	-.08	-.66	.46	-.16	-.61	.90	-.08	-.61	.84	-.10
Child												
Sex (female)	.49	.41	.12	.02	.36	.01	.76	.71	.12	.17	.80	.03
Age (under 25)	-.74	.76	-.10	-.88	.43	-.24	-.05	.70	-.01	-1.16	1.40	-.10
Adjusted R^2		-.02			.06			-.03			.01	
F		.84			1.40			.81			1.04	

Note. Reference category is under 45, white, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 3.8, corresponding to Hypotheses 5-8, made predictions about attainment of adult status goals and parental wellbeing. As hypothesized, there was a statistically significant relationship between offspring's fulltime employment and parental wellbeing (B = .38, $p < .05$). No predictions were made about the association between offspring's marital status and parental wellbeing because prior research shows both a positive and negative relationship. In this study

there was no statistically significant relationship between whether offspring were married and parental wellbeing. The results did not support hypotheses about the relationship between school attendance and living arrangements, and parental wellbeing in any wave. The adjusted r scores were also small, indicating the practical significance or amount of variance explained by the associations was consistent with the lack of statistical significance.

Table 3.8 *Regression Results of Adult Status Goals (Marital Status, School Attendance, Residence and Employment) Predicting Mother's Emotional Wellbeing*

Variables	1994 (n = 123)			1997 (n = 100)			2000 (n = 100)			2005 (n = 93)		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
(Constant)	8.38	1.65		8.42	1.64		8.24	4.94		13.27	6.51	
Goals												
Married	-.95	.65	-.20	.00	.08	.00	-.12	.15	-.11	-.14	.73	-.03
School	-.79	.42	-.20	.35	.42	.11	-.97	.77	-.16	-.66	.81	-.13
Live on Own	.45	.23	.24	-.22	.21	-.14	-.34	.43	-.09	-.42	.70	-.10
Employed	.05	.13	.04	-.03	.13	-.03	.38*	.17	.26	-.03	.19	-.02
Parents												
Age	-.98	.49	-.23	-.11	.41	-.03	.73	1.94	.04	-4.76	2.52	-.30
Race	-.63	.68	-.09	-.77	.56	-.15	-.92	1.15	-.09			
Marital Status	-1.04	.77	-.18	-.47	.64	-.12	-1.95	2.08	-.23	2.79	2.88	.18
Marital Quality												
Low happy	-.13	.67	-.03	-.90	.58	-.23	.63	1.98	.08	-.35	1.40	-.04
Happy	.31	.24	.13	-.09	.22	-.05	.41	.36	.13	.37	.39	.15
Income												
Low	-.16	.51	-.04	1.22**	.48	.35	-1.90*	.95	-.28	.53	1.05	.09
Middle	.21	.27	.09	.64**	.21	.38	-.42	.40	-.14	-.14	.44	-.05
Education												
High school	-.39	.61	-.08	-.75	.54	-.18	-.55	1.13	-.07	1.57	1.44	.21
Post- hs	-.78	.48	-.20	-.83	.45	-.26	.20	.79	.03	-.06	.71	-.01
Graduate	.97	1.53	.06	.39	1.24	.03	-.42	1.90	-.02	.30	.96	.05
Health												
Excellent	-.19	.44	-.04	-.01	.40	.00	-.81	.77	-.12	-1.62	1.06	-.27
Fair	-.27	.53	-.06	-.57	.46	-.14	-.52	.91	-.07	.56	.63	.14
Child												
Sex	.72	.42	.18	-.08*	.37	-.02	.36	.72	.06	.17	.71	.04
Age	-.23	.77	-.03	-1.07	.46	-.30	.24	.72	.04	1.28	1.16	.17
Adjusted R^2		.00			.06			.02			-.08	
F		.99			1.32			1.09			.58	

Note. Reference category is under 45, white, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor, sex: female, age: under 25. 'Post-hs' refers to post- high school.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 3.9 presents results showing that in 2000 offspring's fulltime employment had a positive, statistically significant impact on mother's wellbeing (B = .40, $p < .05$). The results do not support any other hypotheses. In 2005, there was a positive, statistically significant relationship between parent support and wellbeing (B = .94, $p < .01$). This result was not in the hypothesized direction.

Table 3.9 *Regression Results of Parent Support and Adult Status Goals (Marital Status, School Attendance, Residence and Employment) Predicting Mother's Emotional Wellbeing*

Variables	1994 (n = 123)			1997 (n = 100)			2000 (n = 100)			2005 (n = 93)		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
(Constant)	6.52***	1.65		6.79***	1.44		6.33	4.55		3.25	2.54	
Support	.30	.18	.18	-.12	.16	-.10	.01	.30	.00	.94**	.33	.33
Goals												
Married	-.88	.66	-.18	.06	.08	.09	-.15	.14	-.14	-.18	.14	-.15
School	-.59	.42	-.15	.45	.40	.14	-1.04	.75	-.17	.88	.89	.12
Live on Own	.49	.24	.26	-.08	.16	-.06	-.30	.43	-.09	.33	.70	.05
Employed	.09	.12	.07	-.04	.13	-.03	.40*	.17	.27	.20	.19	.12
Parents												
Age	-.84	.49	-.19	-.17	.41	-.05	.64	1.93	.04			
Marital Status	-1.10	.77	-.19	-.46	.59	-.12	-1.51	1.81	-.18	.04	.39	.01
Marital Quality												
Low happy	.08	.68	.02	-.88	.56	-.23	.46	1.68	.06	.08	1.00	.01
Happy	.26	.24	.11	-.11	.22	-.06	.38	.37	.12	.62	.42	.19
Income												
Low	-.39	.52	-.10	1.24**	.48	.35	-1.49	.91	-.22	.42	1.06	.05
Middle	-.18	.29	-.08	.61	.21	.37	-.24	.39	-.08	-.16	.41	-.04
Education												
High school	-.31	.62	-.06	-.98	.55	-.23	-.86	1.11	-.10	.96	1.02	.12
Post hs	-.48	.49	-.12	-.94*	.44	-.29	.05	.77	.01	.97	.83	.16

Table 3.9 *(continued)*

Variables	1994 (n = 123)			1997 (n = 100)			2000 (n = 100)			2005 (n = 93)		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Graduate	1.03	1.55	.07	-.01	1.30	.00	-.18	1.90	-.01	-2.69	3.30	-.09
Health												
Excellent	.22	.57	.05	.50	.52	.14	-.49	.96	-.08	-1.09	1.06	-.15
Good	.28	.51	.07	.59	.46	.18	.57	.89	.10	-.85	.86	-.14
Child												
Sex	.62	.43	.15	.00*	.38	.00	.28	.69	.05	.03	.80	.01
Age	-.34	.79	-.04	-1.07	.46	-.29	.44	.70	.07	-1.14	1.42	-.09
Adjusted R^2		-.01			.05			-.01			.01	
F		.93			1.27			.93			1.06	

Note. Reference category is under 45, white, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor, sex: female, age: under 25. 'Post-hs' refers to post-high school.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Results of fixed effects estimation for the longitudinal analyses are presented in Tables 3.10, 3.11, and 3.12. Table 3.10 presents the results of parent support on mothers' wellbeing. These results show that changes in parent support does not change in affect mothers' wellbeing. Time (year) effect and all demographic control variables are not statistically significant.

Table 3.10 *Fixed Effects Model Predicting Mother's Wellbeing from Parent Support Scores*

Variables	B	SE
Intercept	5.68***	.37
Year		
1994	-.15	.36
1997	-.31	.30
2000	-.25	.30
Parent Support	.04	.06
Age	.01	.21
Marital Status	.26	.39
Marital Quality	.12	.38
Income	-.13	.18
Health	-.14	.16
Effect Size	.11	
N = 178		

Note. Reference categories are year 2005, over 45 years old, married, happily married, income over 80,000, and good health. Effect size was calculated using the coefficient for parent support divided by the overall standard deviation for wellbeing (Maldonado, 2012).
***$p < .001$.

Table 3.11 presents the results of change in offspring attained adult status goals on change in mothers' wellbeing. The results show that change in progress in attaining adult status goals has no affect on change in mothers' wellbeing. Regarding the time (year) effect there is not a statistically significant change in attaining adult status goals and mothers' wellbeing. The control variables also were not significant.

Table 3.11 *Fixed Effects Model Predicting Mother's Wellbeing from Attained Adult Status Goals*

	B	SE
Intercept	5.58***	.46
Year		
1994	-.09	.37
1997	-.30	.32
2000	-.27	.31
Adult Status Goals		
Married	.01	.04
School Attendance	-.01	.17
Living Away from Home	-.01	.08
Employed Fulltime	.08	.05
Age	.00	.22
Marital Status	.22	.39
Marital Quality	.18	.30
Income	-.12	.18
Health	-.13	.16
Effect Size		
Married	2.17	
School Attendance	-.02	
Living Away from Home	-.02	
Employed Fulltime	.17	
N = 178		

Note. Reference categories are year 2005, over 45 years old, married, happily married, income over 80,000, and good health. Effect size was calculated using the coefficients for adult status goals divided by the overall standard deviation for wellbeing (Maldonado, 2012).
***$p < .001$.

The results of the impact of change in parent support and attaining adult status goals together on change in mothers' wellbeing are displayed in Table 3.12. These results do not support hypotheses related to change in support and goals.

Table 3.12 *Fixed Effects Model Predicting Mother's Support from Attained Adult Status Goals*

Variables	B	SE
Intercept	5.52***	.48
Year		
1994	-.14	.38
1997	-.31	.32
2000	-.28	.31
Parent Support	.03	.07
Adult Status Goals		
Married	.00	.04
School Attendance	-.01	.17
Living Away from Home	.00	.09
Employed Fulltime	.08	.05
Age	.00	.22
Marital Status	.24	.39
Marital Quality	.36	.36
Income	-.12	.18
Health	-.13	.16
Effect Size		
Parent Support	.06	
Married	.00	
School Attendance	-.02	
Living Away from Home	.00	
Employed Fulltime	.17	
N = 178		

Note. Reference categories are year 2005, over 45 years old, married, happily married, income over 80,000, and good health. Effect size was calculated using the coefficient for parent support and adult status goals divided by the overall standard deviation for wellbeing (Maldonado, 2012). ***p <.001.

To summarize, cross-sectional regression results support hypotheses predicting that support does not affect parental wellbeing. These results also demonstrate support for predictions that there is a positive relationship between offspring being employed fulltime and mothers' wellbeing. In addition, results show that contrary to what was expected, positive parental wellbeing is related to increased parent support in the latter years of the launching stage.

This study also examined the impact of change in parent support and the attainment of adult status goals on change in mothers' wellbeing. The longitudinal results found that neither parent support nor attaining adult status goals impacted mothers' wellbeing. In the section that follows

the results will be discussed including its implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The first purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between parent support, offspring attainment of adult status goals, and maternal wellbeing. Purpose two was to investigate the effect of these relationships over time, examining changes in maternal wellbeing at four data collection points, 1994, 1997, 2000 and 2005. Life course principles of linked lives and social time-tables guided the selection of these factors as most likely affecting maternal wellbeing. The results show partial support for hypotheses. This section integrates the results of this study with the results of prior research. The section includes the discussion of the ways in which supported hypotheses contribute to advancing our understanding of the relationship between parent support, attaining adult status goals and maternal wellbeing. Also discussed are possible explanations for unsupported hypotheses.

This study shows strong support for prior research, confirming that parent support does not affect wellbeing during most of the launching stage. These findings suggest that mothers may accept support as a normative parenting activity during the early and middle years of launching (Mitchell, 2004). Normative, in this study, means that family transitions are anticipated or expected. Given that mothers' wellbeing was neither positively nor negatively affected by providing support is consistent with research that finds that the social time-table regarding family transitions has shifted and that families cope well with change in the family life course, adapting to the prolonged launching stage (Furstenberg, Jr., 2010; Mitchell & Gee, 1996). Further, in terms of emotional health, the lack of association between support and wellbeing may reflect the ability of middle aged adults to better regulate their emotions (Lachman, 2004). Finally, in general, the launching stage is typically a less stressful period of parenthood; therefore, support levels would have to be extreme to affect wellbeing (Evenson & Simon, 2005).

This research found a positive relationship between offspring's fulltime employment and maternal wellbeing. This link occurred toward the end of the launching stage, when we would expect most young people to be self-sufficient. By age 30, almost all young adults are employed and are financially independent (Arnett, 2007; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999). Despite employment being statistically significant at only one data collection point, this finding is consistent with the literature that links wellbeing and adult status goals. The literature shows that young people employed fulltime are more likely to live independently, thereby reducing the burden of domestic care, which typically falls on mothers (Mitchell, 2004). Further, employed offspring diminish the need for financial assistance and are in a better position to provide support to parents, should it become necessary. Therefore, this research confirms what, intuitively, we would expect and is consistent with prior research (Young et al., 2008).

Results showing a positive statistical relationship between support and wellbeing were unexpected, particularly since this relationship was shown in late launching when offspring are traditionally expected to be self- sufficient (Greenfield & Marks, 2006; Harnett et al., 2013; Pillemer & Suitor, 1991). In addition, this finding conflicts with research showing that parents as well as young adults consider 'intense' support as nonnormative (Fingerman, Cheng, Wesselmann, Zarit, Furstenberg, & Birditt, 2012). These researchers also found that parents reported less life satisfaction who perceived their children as needing too much support. Relative to unsupported hypotheses, although these results are difficult to reconcile with prior research, there are several possible explanations for why attaining adult status goals and providing support either do not affect parental wellbeing or affects it positively. Maternal ambivalence regarding changes in family interactions, altruistic motives, coresiding parents and young adults and sociohistorical shifts for normative parenting behavior may offer insight into this lack of significance. Prior research finds that launching is a highly ambivalent activity that is reflected in the simultaneous desire to help young people become autonomous while keeping family interactions and patterns as they have always been. According to the literature relative to

parenting, "family launching tasks involves maintaining the family system, preserving the family bonds and relational patterns…" (Lomranz, 1995, p. 290). Therefore, providing support may be a practical way for families to maintain familiar family patterns. In addition, assisting with transportation/shopping, providing information and advice, providing emotional support, providing financial assistance and offering guidance in making important life decisions are ongoing ways that parents can continue to be involved with offspring and may serve as a proxy for connection (Mitchell, 2004; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997).

The literature on intergenerational transfers finds that altruism, that is, satisfaction derived from seeing children happy, is one motivation for parental support (Harnett, et al., 2013; Knoester, 2003). It may be that the quality of the parent-child relationship offsets the negative aspects of providing support (Umberson, 1989, 1992; Umberson et al., 2010). Indeed, Mitchell (2004) found that mothers enjoyed providing daily support to coresiding offspring. This finding is inconsistent with other research that reports negative wellbeing of parents sharing the family home with young adult offspring (Umberson & Gove, 1989). Moreover, it is also in contrast to feminist literature, which finds that maternal wellbeing is positively impacted by finally moving into a phase of parenthood that involves little control, but low or no responsibility (Gullette, 2002).

Finally, sociohistorical factors may offer the most likely explanation for the lack of impact of marital status, school attendance and living arrangements on parental wellbeing. Given that the transition to adulthood is prolonged, parents may feel that they are in good company with their parenting cohort. As a result they may feel a sense of normalcy in needing to provide assistance. This, then, may lead to feeling a sense of satisfaction in being able to do so (Harnett et al., 2013). Beyond the prolonged launching stage as the new normal, mothers in this study may hold less conservative or traditional values, and therefore, not place much importance on adult status goals (Rankin & Kenyon, 2008).

Limitations

This study has limited external and measurement validity. In terms of external validity, the dataset lacks generalizability to the population of parents in the launching stage because the sample lacks cultural, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic and geographical diversity. For example, prior research found that in contrast to white parents, African-American elderly parents are more likely to experience depression when their adult offspring are unemployed (Milkie, Bierman & Schieman, 2008). Related to measurement validity, although the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale has good validity, it measures only one aspect of wellbeing. Using additional measurement instruments could provide a more comprehensive measurement of this construct (Keresteš, Brković, & Jagodić, 2012). In addition, low reliability scale scores may have affected statistical results.

Future Research and Implications

The results of this study, for the most part, support hypotheses that posit that maternal support does not affect maternal wellbeing. In contrast, the results do not support hypotheses that predict that lower support levels and greater goal attainment are related to higher wellbeing. This suggests that maternal wellbeing is affected by factors other than the ones tested in this study. Therefore, future research, using qualitative methods, can focus on determining factors that do contribute to wellbeing. Future studies can also compare groups of parents, e.g. parents whose offspring have attained adult status goals with those who have not, fathers versus mothers, coresiding families versus families in which offspring live independently, parents of different ethnic and cultural groups and parents with other children still at home versus those entering the empty nest stage. Future research can also examine the impact of factors external to the family, which may affect wellbeing, such as self-perceived changes in functioning or work-related stressors (Keresteš et al., 2012; Lachman, 2004).

This study's major finding is that mothers are not as frustrated and beleaguered as portrayed by contemporary popular media. This is a generally positive finding, the primary implication

being that mothers are adjusting to the need to provide ongoing support. Support, specifically financial assistance, is important because in lieu of government support, parents (both mothers and fathers, as mothers are significantly represented in the workforce) are critical safety nets for young adults (Harnett et al., 2013). The question, then, becomes if maternal wellbeing is not suffering, how are mothers faring in other important areas of life? Specifically, if maternal resources are invested in offspring well into midlife, what are the implications for their retirement and/or care of elderly family members (Furstenberg, 2008; Lachman, 2004)? These questions are particularly relevant to the wellbeing of mothers given that traditionally and currently they outlive fathers and are often the primary caregivers for the elderly (Butler, Turner, Kaye, Ruffin, & Downey, 2005; Silverstein, Gans, & Yang, 2006; Singleton, 2000; Suthers, 2006).

Conclusion

This research confirmed hypotheses based on theoretical and intuitive factors, as well as, raised many questions. From the results of this study, it is clear that maternal wellbeing is not negatively impacted by providing ongoing support to young adult offspring. It is also clear that whether or not offspring attain traditional adult status goals has no affect on maternal wellbeing. Therefore, we conclude that contemporary mothers are remarkably resilient. They follow the adaptability pattern of earlier parent cohorts, adjusting to prevailing economic and social conditions to ensure the survival and prosperity of their offspring. And it seems that their emotional wellbeing does not suffer in making these adjustments. However, given increased the longevity of both the mother and grandparent generation the impact of prolonged child support on other facets of wellbeing remains to be seen.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE EFFECT OF THE QUALITY OF THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP ON ROLE EVALUATION DURING THE LAUNCHING STAGE

"For me, success of being a good parent is having your children want your company" (Francis-Connolly, 2000, p. 286).

The launching stage, the period between adolescence and the empty nest, is a gateway or transitional stage during which the responsibilities of active child rearing gradually decrease. In order for parenthood transitions to be successful specific developmental tasks must be completed (Galinsky, 1987). During the launching stage two developmental tasks are: (a) to redefine the parenting role and (b) to evaluate oneself in the parenting role. In general, empirical research is limited regarding the role evaluation of contemporary parents. Further, even less is known about the impact of role definition on evaluation. Parents redefine the parenting role by decreasing support and maintaining relational continuity. This study is focused on the relational continuity aspect of role definition. Relational continuity is defined as both maintaining current parent-child connections and developing new interaction patterns (Young, Marshall, Domene, Graham, Logan, Zaidman-Zait, & Lee, 2008). In this study, relational continuity is conceptualized as the quality of the parent-young adult relationship. It is measured as mothers' perceived closeness and conflict with offspring. Thus, the purpose of this research is to address the gap in knowledge about role evaluation by examining the effect of the quality of the parent-young adult offspring relationship on parent role evaluation during the launching stage of parenthood.

The quality of the parent-child relationship is important for both generations (Fingerman, Pitzer, Lefkowitz, Birditt, & Mroczek, 2008). Research growing out of the transition to adulthood literature indicates that, for young adults, relational maturity—the ability to take the perspective of others including parents, is more important than traditional goals for gauging progress in achieving adult status (Arnett, 2001). Relative to parents, the quality of the parent-

child relationship is the main mechanism for how they influence young adult decision-making during the launching stage (Thompson, Acock, & Clark, 1985). Therefore, identifying whether closeness and conflict follow a predictable trajectory may help families as well as professionals who work with parents to recognize normative versus maladjustive interaction patterns. Moreover, closeness and conflict are thought to be the standard against which mothers judge or evaluate their satisfaction and performance in the parent role (Francis-Connolly, 2000).

In terms of its development, the parent-child relationship begins with attachments that are formed in the earliest stages of parenthood (Galinsky, 1987). Despite the strong, positive nature of many of these attachments, the relationship is unique, in that, it is not reciprocal. This means that parents are responsible for the physical as well as emotional needs of children. They understand and care about their offspring's joys and concerns, but minor children generally do not share similar responsibility for parents (Francis-Connolly, 2000; Gullette, 2002). Though literature does not suggest that complete reciprocity ever occurs between parents and children, it does find that during the launching stage the relationship changes, becoming more friendship-based and peer-like (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). In this study, developmental relationship changes occurring during the launching stage stem, in part, from parental self-evaluation.

Self-evaluation of the parent role could be triggered by multiple family and life events. First, the launching stage generally occurs in mid-life when the parent role as well as other major adult roles (e.g. work and marriage) may come under scrutiny (Ryff, Kee, Essex, & Schmutte, 1994). In addition, in this study, the high school graduation of young family members represents for parents a graduation of sorts from active parenting, thus, fostering self-reflection specifically about the parent role. Despite the recognition that self-evaluation is a mid-life developmental task (Ryff et al., 1994, Ryff, Schmutte, & Lee, 1996), insight into parent role evaluation during the launching stage is not well understood.

Given the considerable investment parents make in parenting, it is surprising that how they feel about their past and present role satisfaction and performance does not receive more empirical attention. Thus, this study is significant for four reasons. First, it recognizes the launching stage as a critical transition when parents weigh their parenting decisions and actions, judging their performance to-date. Second, it also examines the quality of the relationship between parents and young adult offspring as an important factor in determining how parents feel about themselves in the parent role. Third, in contrast to the literature that finds that parents strongly influence their offspring (Koepke & Denissen, 2012), this study contributes to the literature on the effect of parenthood on parents. Finally, this study contributes to the body of parenthood research, focusing on parenting tasks and outcomes during the launching stage.

In order to investigate the relationship between the quality of the parent-child relationship and parent role evaluation the study uses measures covering two time waves—1994 and 1997—and a measure covering four time waves—1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. This research also estimates the change in role evaluation and the quality of the parent-child relationship over time (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005). Figure 4.1 presents the conceptual model of this study. It identifies the quality of the parent-child relationship as having a direct impact on parental role evaluation.

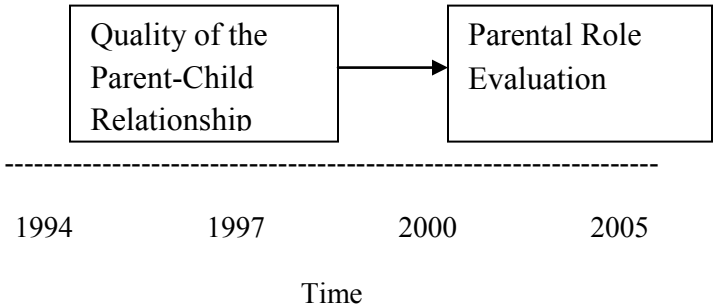

Figure 4.1 Chapter Four Conceptual Model

The section that follows reviews the literature on closeness and conflict in the parent-child relationship during the launching stage. It also reviews empirical studies investigating parent self-evaluation defined as role satisfaction, role performance, and self-esteem.

Literature Review

In the literature, research on parent-adult child relationships typically group the launching and empty nest stage together and define adult offspring as those between 18-54 years old (Fingerman, Miller, Birditt, & Zarit, 2009; Hay, Fingerman, & Lefkowitz, 2007; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; LaValley & Guerrero, 2012). Combining the launching and empty nest stage is problematic because the developmental issues associated with each stage are different. For example, one focus of empty nest stage research is the impact of the quality of the parent-adult child relationship on older parents' wellbeing (Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002; Pillemer & Suitor, 1991). Studies find that elderly parents' psychological wellbeing is strongly linked with the quality of the relationship with their adult children. Emotionally distant and troubled relationships are positively associated with older parents' depression (Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002). To illustrate, poor relationship quality stemming from the problems of adult children has been associated with the negative psychological wellbeing of elderly parents (Fingerman, Cheng, Birditt, & Zarit, 2012; Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002; Pillemer & Suitor, 1991). These studies, though informative about parent-adult child relationships, do not focus on the launching stage. As a result, these findings are not as relevant for younger parents and young adult offspring transitioning through the launching stage.

Another focus of empty nest stage research is mutual reciprocity (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Lye, 1996; Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2002). Studies investigating exchanges between adult children and elderly parents report that both generations expect children to offer assistance should it become necessary (Allen, Blieszner, & Roberto, 2000; Fingerman, et al., 2012; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Lye, 1996; Silverstein, et al., 2002; Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010). Further, intergenerational exchange scholars find that exchanges are, in part, reciprocity for earlier relationship investments (Silverstein, et al., 2002). Therefore, though this literature does not directly focus on the launching stage, it does suggest

that the groundwork for later exchanges is laid during earlier stages, which include the launching stage.

In contrast to the developmental focus of parents and adult children in the empty nest stage, parents and children in the launching stage are actively involved in redefining the nature of their relationship. Redefining the relationship primarily involves decreasing parent support and developing new interaction patterns. Relative to decreasing support, launching parents are focused on transferring day-to-day support responsibilities to young adults who are in the process of attaining adult goals and demonstrating personal and interpersonal adjustments to adult life (Ryff, et al., 1994). Though not relevant to this study, a notable exception to the lack of targeted research on the launching stage is the growing interest in coresiding parents and adult offspring (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995; Mitchell & Gee, 1996; Mitchell, 2004; Tang, 1997).

In terms of the developmental task of developing new interaction patterns, studies investigating the parent-child relationship during the launching stage find that the quality, the degree of closeness and conflict between parents and children, is not static or fixed (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Christensen, Evans, & Carroll, 2011). Studies investigating this subject find that the affective quality of the relationship is important and gradually changes (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Thornton, Orbuch, & Axinn, 1995; Young et al., 2008). For example, though conflict can occur in the early years of the launching stage (Koepke & Denissen, 2012), the relationship is generally positive (Fingerman, et al., 2012) and improves with the age of the child (Thornton et al., 1995). Despite the extensive literature on the parent-child relationships, the research that strictly focuses on the quality of the parent-child relationship in the launching stage is limited. Therefore, this study focuses entirely on changes in the quality of the parent-child relationship that occur as parents launch children between 18-34 years old.

Importance of the parent-child relationship

Multiple studies provide evidence that parents judge their success and failure in the parent role by child social adjustment and achievement of adult status goals, such as employment and

marital status (Allen, et al., 2000; DeVries, Kerrick, & Oetinger, 2007; Fingerman, et al., 2012; Pillemer & Suitor, 1991). However, research also finds that, for parents, the relationship is the reward for parenting (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987; Francis-Connolly, 2000). The importance of the relationship is also supported in the literature on the transition to adulthood, suggesting that the relationship between parents and young adults may be the current standard for how parents evaluate success in the parent role rather than traditional adult status markers (Arnett, 2001; Young et al., 2008).

Second, the quality of the parent-child relationship impacts parent ability to influence young adults (Thompson, et al., 1985). According to these researchers (Thompson, et al., 1985), the launching stage is conceptualized as a period of mutual influence during which persuasion is the primary means parents use for influencing behavior. In positive relationships, children are more open to parent suggestions, while in negative relationships children resist parent assistance—information and advice—making transferring caregiving responsibility more difficult (Young et al., 2008). Finally, as stated earlier, maintaining a positive relationship has important implications for the psychological wellbeing of parents in later life (Fingerman, et al., 2012; Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002).

Continuity and change in the parent-child relationship

The literature investigating continuity in the parent-child relationship finds that some aspects of parent-child interactions, particularly those involving mothers, are slow to change. For example, mothering in the launching stage frequently takes the form of listening and providing feedback (Francis-Connolly, 2000; Gullette, 2002). However, mothers may also want to discuss their own concerns, but refrain from doing so, continuing long-established patterns (Dillaway, 2006). The pattern of interest flowing from parents to offspring, but not offspring to parents is consistent with the generational stake principle in which parents, due to their considerable investments of time, energy, and resources, tend to accept the onus for the relationship and also,

report relationships more positively than do children (Bengtson & Kuypers, 1971; Giarrusso, Du, & Bengtson, 2004).

Nevertheless, other studies also report that change does gradually take place (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987; Young et al., 2008). A study of 18-23 year olds reported that quality improves with the age of the child (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Thornton et al., 1995) Although the parent-child relationship during the launching stage is generally positive (Fingerman et al., 2012), Koepke and Denissen (2012) found that there may be temporary fluctuations in the quality of the relationship. These fluctuations often occur in the direction of more conflict as children strive for independence and parents learn to facilitate children's autonomy while remaining connected (Johnson & Wilkinson, 1995). According to Lüscher and Pillemer (1998), parents experience a significant shift in the sense of responsibility that they feel toward children between adolescence and adulthood, resulting in ambivalence—both positive and negative feelings. In this study, I propose that conflict may be highest in the early and middle stages of the launching stage and decrease in the later stages as parents and young people co-author, that is, create, maintain, and communicate a mature relationship (Dillaway, 2006).

Role Evaluation

The process for evaluating the parent role involves reflection on role performance resulting in satisfaction or regrets (DeVries et al., 2007; Pillemer & Suitor, 1991; Spence & Lonner, 1971). The literature suggests that while the parent-child relationship is salient to parental wellbeing throughout parenthood (Allen et al., 2000; Umberson et al., 2010) the "practical and symbolic importance of parenthood" declines over time (Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002, p. 959). Little is known about the process through which the declining practical and symbolic importance of parenthood takes place. Intuitively, the process suggests that some degree of self-evaluation must occur. Though reflection is not always conscious or deliberate, according to Dillaway (2006), mothers know who they must be to be good mothers.

Parental role evaluation has been measured using multiple dimensions such as psychological wellbeing, depression, self-esteem, environmental mastery, and purpose in life (Ryff et al., 1994; Ryff et al., 1996). In addition to role satisfaction and role performance, in this research, the level of parent's self-esteem is seen as providing insight into their self-evaluation. The research measuring parental role evaluation as self-esteem argues that parents' self-esteem is impacted by the parents' perception of their children's adult status. According to Ryff et al., (1994), during the launching years, parents base their success or failure as parents on young adult children's goal attainments, and personal and interpersonal adjustments. In this study, the closeness and conflict young adults experience with parents is just as important an indicator of interpersonal adjustment as that experienced with peers and others. Therefore, the quality of the relationship between parents and offspring becomes an important measure of parental effectiveness, thereby impacting parental self-esteem.

The literature indicates that role evaluation is an ongoing activity that is triggered by major events in the lives of the eldest child – turning 18 or graduating from high school (DeVries et al, 2007). The nature of this evaluation is the appraisal of past relationship quality and performance. Parents judge a parenthood stage to be successful when the childrearing task for that particular developmental has been completed (Parens, 1975). Therefore, as adolescence ends, parents are likely to review their active parenting years and draw conclusions about themselves in the parenting role to-date. Positive evaluations are experienced as satisfaction, while negative evaluations result in regret (DeVries et al., 2007; Francis-Connolly, 2000; Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002).

Second, beyond initial appraisals, the literature finds that role evaluation continues throughout the launching stage as offspring progress in attaining adult status goals. A number of studies find that how adult offspring turn out is the yardstick parents use to appraise their own success or failure, impacting parent wellbeing (Connidis & McMullin, 1993; Fingerman et al., 2012; Pillemer & Suitor, 1991; Ryff, et al., 1996). Moreover, as the parent-adult child relationship

changes, role satisfaction continues to be important (Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972) and is generally higher for parents in the post-adolescent years (Francis-Connolly, 2002; Gullette, 2002; Umberson et al., 2010). According to Koropeckyj-Cox (2002), parents who are close to adult children experience satisfaction and esteem. Despite the importance of self appraisal during the launching stage, there exists a gap in knowledge about the ways in which the quality of the relationship between parents and children impacts parent role evaluation.

Summary

Review of the literature on the parent-child relationship finds that unlike parent support, which declines over time, the relationship between parents and young adult offspring becomes an increasingly important aspect of parenthood during the launching stage and beyond. This research typically combines all adult offspring and parent relationships, not distinguishing between grown offspring in the launching stage and those well into their own midlife. Nevertheless, it is clear that the quality of the parent-child relationship and parents' judgment of their role performance and satisfaction are related. However, no known study investigates change in relationship quality and parent role evaluation over time. Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand the effect of the quality of the parent-child relationship on parent role evaluation over the course of the launching stage.

Theory

This study draws on symbolic interactionism, exchange theory, and conflict theory to explain the interaction between parents' sense of self in the parent role and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Symbolic interactionism addresses role evaluation as one aspect of one's self-concept that develops through ongoing social and familial interactions (Blumer, 1966). Exchange theory and conflict theory frames the parent-child relationship in the context of expectations and power.

Symbolic Interactionism

Among family theories, symbolic interactionism is unique for its focus on self and its understanding of families as social groups (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). This study views role evaluation—a subset of self-concept, from the perspective of George Herbert Mead, an early interactionist theorist. Mead posited that it is possible to think about, interact with, and evaluate oneself just as we do others (Blunter, 1994). The following assumptions support this perspective: (a) self-concept is formed through interactions, (b) self-concept is expressed in appropriated roles and identities, and (c) because interactions are mutual and continual, the development of self-concept is also continual. Therefore, through interactions that help to shape roles and identities, families as social groups are directly involved in the ongoing development of each member. Role evaluation is an important outcome of this development as it is based, in part, on accumulated interactions.

Symbolic interactionism frames roles in terms of role taking and role making. In this study, role taking and role making help shape role evaluation. As it relates to the parent role, role taking involves parents' perceptions of the formal and informal rules for parenthood (Blunter, 1994). Parents as members of particular subcultures and of society in general help to create implicit and explicit standards for parenting behavior. Role making is the process in which parents negotiate with self and others shared expectations of the parent role. At the micro-level, through role making, together parents and children define family rules of engagement. During the launching stage, even as role taking becomes more difficult, there is a surge in role making (Young et al., 2008). In this stage, there are fewer institutional and social guidelines defining norms and constraining parental behavior. Without these, parents must create their own guidelines for negotiating the transition to the empty nest. Symbolic interactionism explains that in the absence of clear societal rules, standards for self-evaluation are provided by thoughts about and evaluations of past and present role taking and role making. In this study, one standard parents use to judge present interactions is the quality of the parent-child relationship. While symbolic

interactionism grounds our understanding of the parent role and the processes involved in its development, exchange theory and conflict theory are needed to understand the importance of the parent-child relationship.

Exchange Theory

Parent expectations are dynamic, fluctuating on the basis of the age and needs of children (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Parens, 1975). According to Umberson (1992, p. 665), close relationships are characterized by strains as well as rewards. Consequently, in this study, exchange theory explains that the impact of the affective quality of the parent-child relationship on role evaluation stems, in part, from changes in parent expectations of children. According to the rewards and costs principle of exchange theory, when expectations are met, or when we receive more than we expect, relationships are positive and satisfying. Alternately, when expectations are unmet, they are negative and costly (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

Exchange theory's norms of reciprocity, fairness, and mutuality underscore the importance of give and take in relationships (Homans, 1958). The norm of reciprocity is that if relationships are to be rewarding they must be reciprocal. According to the norm of fairness, relationships must be fair, meaning that give and take should be equal as well as reciprocal. The concept of mutuality is that interactions among all parties should be mutual.

Studies on parenthood and wellbeing find that parents of young children experience greater distress and fewer rewards than parents of children no longer living at home (McLanahan & Adams, 1986; Umberson et al., 2010). Lower satisfaction is explained, in part, as resulting from the strains that are associated with caring for minor children, supporting the rewards and costs principle. It could be that early parent-child relationships violate norms of reciprocity, fairness, and mutuality, but are more easily tolerated because they are seen as temporary. In contrast, launching parents may have different standards for older children perceiving that they are now capable of more relational maturity (DeVries et al., 2007; Gullette, 2002). Norm violations, then,

are more costly and may affect not only the affective quality of the parent-child relationship, but how parents evaluate the parent role as well.

This study explores parent role evaluation as it is affected by the shift in the balance of power and the resultant growing expectations for greater reciprocity, fairness, and mutuality during the transition from the launching stage to the empty nest stage. I predict that closeness will become more rewarding over time. However, I expect that conflict between parents and children decreases over time. Furthermore, decreased conflict should positively affect parent role evaluation.

Exchange Theory and Conflict Theory

As they separately transition to adulthood and the empty nest, both young adult offspring and parents desire a different sort of relationship. They desire one that includes mutual understanding and support (Arnett, 2001; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Koepke & Denissen, 2012). Exchange theory's norm of reciprocity explains that parents not only anticipate, but also actively work toward a relationship in which they receive, as well as, provide emotional support (Gullette, 2002). This change can be conceptualized as an inner, psychological transition.

Exchange theory frames relationships as dynamic and subject to new standards if they are to continue to be satisfying. However, conflict theory is needed to explain that outer, that is, behavioral transitions also are needed if new expectations are to be realized. According to conflict theory, conflict in relationships is inevitable, partially due to power imbalances (Farrington & Chertok, 1993). Negotiation is the skill family members use to achieve the balance of power they each desire (Thompson et al., 1985; Young et al., 2008). Learning to communicate in new ways redefines the parent role, helping to create relationships that are mutually supportive (Dillaway, 2006). However, in the process of developing new levels of relationship maturity, conflict can occur. Together the norm of reciprocity (exchange theory) and negotiation (conflict theory) suggest that a positive outcome of relationship struggles during this transition can be a more peer-like relationship and increased positive parent self-evaluation.

In sum, symbolic interactionism frames the parent role as developed and evaluated through role taking and role making. The complementary nature of symbolic interactionism and exchange theory explain "how rewards and costs acquire meaning" (Rank & LeCroy, 1983, p.445). Exchange and conflict theory are used to understand the impact of the parent-child relationship on parent role evaluation. Exchange theory's rewards and costs, and norms of reciprocity, fairness, and mutuality help to explain why growing concerns about 'what's in it for me?' might affect parents' role evaluation. Conflict theory and exchange theory together describe the development of a mutually supportive relationship as resulting from changes in both psychological expectations and behavioral patterns.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the quality of the parent-child relationship by addressing the following questions: (a) how does the quality of the parent-child relationship change over the course of the launching stage; (b) how does parent self-evaluation change over the course of the launching stage, and (c) what is the effect of changes in the quality of the parent-child relationship on changes in parent self-evaluation?

On the basis of the literature and the theoretical frameworks the following hypotheses were tested:

H1: parents' role evaluation increases over the course of the transition, 1994-2005.

H2: closeness increases over the course of the launching stage, 1994-2005.

H3: conflict decreases over the course of the transition, 1994-2005.

H4: decreased conflict positively affects parental role evaluation (1994-2005).

Method

Data and Sample

This research uses data from the 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005 waves of the Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG). The LSOG, began in 1971, is based on surveys from a sample of 2044 individuals from 300 three-generation California families, who were selected using a multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure from the 840,000 membership list of a California Health

Maintenance Organization in Los Angeles (Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012). The original sample included grandparents (in their sixties), children (in their forties), and grandchildren (between 15 and 26). Follow-up mail-back surveys were administered in 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. In 1991 a fourth generation was added—great-grandchildren (average age 20). The sample is generally representative of White, working, middle income families. Though the original sample predominantly resided in California, over half of recent respondents now live outside of the state.

The LSOG provides an excellent data source for studying maternal role evaluation during the launching stage. In particular, LSOG includes relevant questions on the parent role in the launching stage, as well as measures of intergenerational relationships between mothers and offspring such as closeness and conflict. The longitudinal nature of this data set also enables me to examine changes in mothers' self-evaluation of the parental role. The data set, covering 1994 through 2005, includes mothers of a randomly assigned "study child". Respondents for this study were chosen to meet two inclusion criteria: (a) mothers of young people who were in late adolescence in 1994 (the beginning of the launching life stage), and (b) mothers who participated in at least two consecutive time waves (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005) for examining change in parental role evaluation.

Justification for examining mothers only was based on two statistical requirements for the repeated measures analyses: (a) to avoid potential bias between mothers and fathers in the same household, and (b) mothers, but not fathers, met minimum sample size requirements needed to obtain meaningful results. Therefore, this sample includes mother-child dyads: 97 (1994), 97 (1997), 93 (2000), and 81 (2005) for the cross-sectional analyses. Additionally, longitudinal analyses include the following mother-child dyads: 123 (1994), 100 (1997), 101 (2000), and 94 (2005).

Measures

The dependent variable, role evaluation, consisted of three ordinal measures: parent role satisfaction, parent role performance, and self-esteem. The first two measures were one-item questions that were asked in 1994 and 1997 only. Role satisfaction was measured by responses to the question, "all in all, how satisfied are you with being a parent these days?" Responses were rated on a scale of '1' (not at all satisfied) to '6' (extremely satisfied). Higher scores indicated greater satisfaction. Maximum score was 6. Role performance was measured by responses to "Please assess your role performance (as a parent)". Responses were rated '1' (poor) through '4' (excellent). Higher scores indicated greater assessment of performance. Maximum score was 4.

The third measure, self-esteem, included two dimensions: self appraisal of one's ability and satisfaction with one's performance in salient life roles. These dimensions are linked with the parent role which is an important adult role (Pasley & Gecas, 1984). Further, it is well-established empirically that some aspects of parents' wellbeing (e.g. self-esteem) are strongly affected by the quality of the parent-child relationship (Fingerman, et al., 2012; Greenfield & Marks, 2006; Koropeckyj-Cox, 2002; Ryff et al., 1994). Therefore, in this study, self-esteem was used as proxy of mothers' role satisfaction and role performance (Ryff et al., 1994). In this research, the measure of self-esteem was obtained using eight items from Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale. The scale included positive and negative statements, (e.g. positive statements include, "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself," and negative statements include, "I feel I do not have much to be proud of"). Respondents rated their agreement with each statement from '1' (strongly disagree) to '4' (strongly agree). Positive statements were reversed coded to indicate this rating. An additive score was computed ranging from 8 to 32, with higher scores indicating greater self-esteem. Cronbach's alpha for the eight items was: 0.87 (1994), 0.80 (1997), 0.81 (2000), and 0.84 (2005). Rosenberg's Self-Esteem is widely used and is reported to have good validity (Schmitt & Allik, 2005; Wongpakaran & Wongpakaran, 2011). It has a criterion validity score of 55 (Rosenberg, 1965).

Two independent ordinal variables, closeness and conflict, were used to measure the quality of the parent-child relationship. Closeness was a scale of five items: "how close do you feel is the relationship between you and your study child (or mother/father)"; "how good is communication with your study child"; "how well do you get along"; "how well does your study child understand you"; and "how well do you feel you understand your study child?". Conflict was a scale of three items: "How much conflict do you feel there is between you and your study child"; "how much do you feel this child is critical of you or what you do"; and "how much does the study child argue with you?" Each response is rated from '1' (not at all close, well, etc.) to '6' (a great deal). An additive score was computed ranging from 5 to 30 for closeness and 3 to 18 for conflict. Higher scores indicate greater closeness or conflict in the parent-child relationship. Cronbach's alpha for closeness was: 0.79 (1994), 0.71 (1997), 0.78 (2000), and 0.81 (2005). Cronbach's alpha for conflict was: 0.73 (1994), 0.55 (1997), 0.53 (2000), and 0.66 (2005).

Based on theoretically and empirically relevant factors control variables were added to improve the predictive power of the model and to avoid omitted variable biases. For mothers these variables were: age, race, marital status, marital quality, income, education, and physical health. Age (effect) was related to change in the self-esteem by age, irrespective of calendar year. Year (effect) was related to change in the self-esteem affecting all respondents at a point in time, irrespective of age. Control variables of children were age, sex and residence.

Analyses

In order to determine differences between parents (mothers and fathers) in the same household and parents (mothers and fathers responding in at least two consecutive waves), I conducted mean comparisons of role evaluation, and closeness and conflict. I conducted all other analyses using two data sets, mothers responding in any year (cross-sectional regression) and mothers responding in at least two consecutive years (longitudinal analyses).

Cross-sectional analyses included descriptive statistics of sample characteristics, correlations of the dependent, independent, and control variables, and mean comparisons of each measure of

the dependent and independent variables. I conducted cross-sectional regressions with mothers to evaluate the relationship between role evaluation and closeness, and role evaluation and conflict for each time wave (1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005). For regression analyses binary (dummy variables) were created for all ordinal control variables.

I conducted longitudinal analyses with mothers responding in at least two consecutive time waves. Analyses included descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics, means of the dependent and independent variables, and means of the dependent variable by demographic characteristics; these were conducted for 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. I used fixed effects models to estimate the impact of change in closeness and conflict on change in role evaluation (self-esteem). The baseline value was used for the time-invariant demographic control variables. Regressions for closeness and conflict in the parent-child relationship were fitted separately because they are correlated.

Results

Analyses comparing mothers and fathers in the same household indicated that they were consistent over time in how they evaluate the parent role. For these parents, levels of closeness and conflict in the parent-child relationship were also similar. Analyses comparing parents in the same household with parents who responded in at least two consecutive waves showed that they were consistent with each other in how they evaluate the parent role over time. Tables 1-3 display these results.

Table 4.1 *Means of Dependent Variables (Role Evaluation- Role Satisfaction, Role Performance, and Self-Esteem) of Parents in the Same Household over Time*

Measure	1994 *n*=104	1997 *n*=92	2000 *n*=94	2005 *n*=100
Mothers				
Role Satisfaction	3.37	2.90		
Role Performance	2.35	2.38		
Self-esteem	26.75	27.02	27.15	27.52
Fathers				
Role Satisfaction	3.06	2.60		
Role Performance	2.08	2.15		
Self-esteem	27.15	27.02	27.00	-------

Note. 1994 N= 52 households (52 mother-child and 52 father-child dyads); 1997 N=46 households (46 mother-child and 46 father-child dyads); 2000 N= 47 households (47 mother-child dyads and 47 father-child dyads); and 2005 N= 50 households (50 mother-child dyads and 50 father-child dyads). Fathers were not included in 2005 for self-esteem due to missing data.

Table 4.2 *Means of Independent Variables (Closeness and Conflict) of Parents in the Same Household over Time*

Measure	1994	1997	2000	2005
Mother				
Closeness	22.69	23.47	22.61	22.51
Conflict	6.90	5.97	5.80	5.55
Father				
Closeness	21.53	20.41	20.80	21.64
Conflict	6.62	6.56	6.24	5.50

Table 4.3 *Comparison of Role Evaluation (Role Satisfaction, Role Performance, and Self-Esteem) by All-Sample and Parents in the Same Household (Means)*

Measure	1994	1997	2000	2005
All-Sample	*n*=181	*n*=156	*n*=158	*n*=151
Parents in Same Household	*n*=104	*n*=92	*n*=94	*n*=100
Parent Role Satisfaction	3.14	2.80		
	3.21	2.75		
Parent Role Performance	2.27	2.30		
	2.21	2.27		
Self-Esteem	26.75	27.24	26.00	22.25
	26.95	27.02	27.06	21.22

Table 4.4 presents the descriptive statistics of the characteristics of mothers responding at any year and study children. For display purposes, the table presents regrouped variables for mother's age, race, marital quality, income, educational level, and health and sex, age and place of residence of children. Mothers in the sample were predominantly White, married, reported being happily married, in good health, financially middle income at the start of the study, but high income by the end, educated beyond high school and in good health. Children in the sample were predominantly female and over the course of the transition moved from living with parents to on their own.

Table 4.4 *Sample Characteristics of Mothers across Four Time Waves*

Characteristics	1994 (*n*=97)	1997 (*n*=97)	2000 (*n*=93)	2005 (*n*=81)
Parent				
Age (means)	43.5	46.5	49.5	54.5
Age (%)				
Under 45	67.0	63.9	3.2	.7
Sex (%)				
Female (mother)	68.8	65.1	62.0	68.8
Race (%)				
White	91.8	87.6	91.0	86.4
Marital Status (%)				
Married	83.5	76.3	86.0	90.2
Marital Quality (%)				
Low Happy	11.3	16.5	11.8	12.3
Happy	60.8	52.6	65.6	75.3
Highly Happy	27.8	30.9	22.6	11.1
Household Income (%)				
Under $40,000	25.8	21.6	16.1	17.3
$40,000-$79,999	43.3	41.2	36.6	24.7
$80,000 and over	27.8	32.0	44.1	51.9
Education (%)				
High School or less	19.6	17.5	16.1	13.6
Some College	49.5	52.6	47.3	48.1
College Graduate	28.9	27.8	34.4	35.8
Graduate School	1.0	1.0	2.2	1.2

Table 4.4 *(continued)*

Characteristics	1994 (*n*=97)	1997 (*n*=97)	2000 (*n*=93)	2005 (*n*=81)
Health				
Excellent	29.9	25.8	29.0	22.2
Good	49.5	55.7	49.5	54.3
Fair	20.6	18.6	21.5	23.5
Child				
Age (mean)	19.3	22.5	25.0	27.8
Age (%)				
Under 25	91.8	75.3	43.0	6.2
Female	62.9	61.9	64.5	61.7
Residence				
With parents	53.6	25.5	15.1	4.9

Note. Income is not adjusted for inflation due to unavailability of income amount. Categories not summing to 100% reflect missing data.

Table 4.5 displays the means of role evaluation (role satisfaction, role performance, and self-esteem) and the quality of the parent-child relationship (closeness and conflict) over time. The results show little change in the means of these variables, with the exception of a decrease in self-esteem in 2005.

Table 4.5 *Means of Dependent and Independent Variables across Four Time Waves*

Variables	1994 (*n*=97)	1997 (*n*=97)	2000 (*n*=93)	2005 (*n*=81)
Role Evaluation				
Role Satisfaction	4.76	4.80		
Role Performance	3.35	3.30		
Self-Esteem	26.52	27.20	26.99	22.96
Quality of Parent-Child Relationship				
Closeness	22.79	23.03	22.91	22.77
Conflict	6.97	6.05	5.95	5.89

From the results of correlation analyses, conflict is strongly associated with closeness (r = -.67 (1994), -.56 (1997), -.58 (2000), and -.65 (2005), $p < .01$), respectively. There is a high correlation between closeness and conflict. However, theoretically, they are unique measures of the construct quality of the parent-child relationship and can be examined separately (Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2011). Thus, the current study followed this approach. (Tables 4.6-4.9 present the correlations among variables).

Table 4.6 *Summary of Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Dependent and Independent Variables for 1994*

Measures	Role Satisfaction	Role Performance	Self-Esteem	Close	Conflict	Mean	SD
Role Satisfaction						4.76	1.19
Role Performance	.57**					3.35	.65
Self-Esteem	.49**	.57**				26.52	3.39
Close	.52**	.45**	.46**			22.79	5.50
Conflict	-.35**	-.13	-.19	-.67**	1.00	6.97	3.03

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.7 *Summary of Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Dependent and Independent Variables for 1997*

Measures	Role Satisfaction	Role Performance	Self-Esteem	Close	Conflict	Mean	SD
Role Satisfaction						4.80	1.11
Role Performance	.35**					3.30	.77
Self-Esteem	.29**	.42**				27.20	3.06
Close	.42**	.35**	.35**			23.03	4.95
Conflict	-.19	-.12	-.30**	-.56**	1.00	6.05	2.39

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.8 *Summary of Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Dependent and Independent Variables for 2000*

Measures	Self-Esteem	Close	Conflict	Mean	SD
Self-Esteem				26.99	3.11
Close	.31**			22.91	4.69
Conflict	-.22*	-.58**	1.00	5.95	2.74

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.9 *Summary of Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Dependent and Independent Variables for 2005*

Measures	Self-Esteem	Close	Conflict	Mean	SD
Self-Esteem				22.96	3.36
Close	.48**			22.77	5.14
Conflict	-.38**	-.65**	1.00	5.89	2.55

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Presentation of OLS regression results are organized by each year. Tables 4.10 and 4.11 highlight the strong relationship between role evaluation and closeness and conflict, for each year, respectively. Role satisfaction and role performance were used as dependent variables in 1994 and 1997 analyses only. Table 4.10 presents results for closeness showing that in 1994 maternal reports of closeness in the relationship were strongly related to all measures of role evaluation. Mothers reporting closeness indicated greater role satisfaction (B= .10, p < .001), highly rated role performance (B = .05, p < .001), and greater self-esteem (B = .27, p < .001). In 1997, regression results regarding closeness in the parent-child relationship and maternal role evaluation were similar to those in 1994. Results indicated a significant positive relationship between closeness and role satisfaction (B = .08, p <.001), role performance (B = .05, p < .001), and self-esteem (B = .17, p < .05). In 2000, the analysis indicated that self-esteem was predicted

by closeness (B = .16, p <.05). In 2005, parental role evaluation measured as self-esteem was predicted by closeness (B = .28, p < .001).

Table 4.10 *1994 Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Demographic, Dependent Variables and Closeness Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Role Satisfaction, Role Performance, and Self-Esteem)*

Variables	Role Satisfaction			Role Performance			Self-Esteem		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
1994 (n=97)									
(Constant)	2.21	1.01		2.16	.54		24.05	3.09	
Close	.10***	.02	.49	.05***	.01	.39	.27***	.06	.44
Parent									
Age	-.57*	.26	-.23	-.24	.14	-.18	-.97	.79	-.14
Race	.36	.48	.07	.15	.26	.06	-1.15	1.47	-.08
Marital Status	.59	.33	.19	-.09	.18	-.05	.62	1.01	.07
Marital Quality									
Low happy	-.80*	.38	-.22	-.27	.20	-.13	-.37	1.16	-.04
Happy	-.09	.26	-.04	-.11	.14	-.08	-.64	.79	-.09
Income									
Low income	-.19	.33	-.07	-.38	.18	-.26*	-.18	1.01	-.02
Middle income	-.27	.26	-.11	-.25	.14	-.19	-1.17	.80	-.17
Education									
High school	-.46	.33	-.16	-.18	.18	-.11	-2.17*	1.03	-.26
Some college	-.05	.26	-.02	.02	.14	.02	-.65	.79	-.10
Graduate	-1.00	1.07	-.09	-.65	.57	-.10	-1.02	3.28	-.03
Health									
Excellent	.08	.33	.03	-.14	.18	-.10	.52	1.01	.07
Good	.12	.30	.05	-.18	.16	-.14	.37	.93	.05
Child									
Age									
Under 25	.58	.42	.14	.88***	.23	.38	-.59	1.29	-.05
Sex (female)	-.11	.24	-.04	.14	.13	.10	-.03	.74	.00
Resides with parents	-.09	.23	-.04	-.08	.12	-.06	.68	.70	.10
Adjusted R^2		.09			.33			.20	
F		3.57			3.91			2.43	

Note. Reference category is under 45, White, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor.
*p < .05. ***p < .001.

Table 4.10 (continued) *1997 Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Demographic, Dependent Variables and Closeness Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Role Satisfaction, Role Performance, and Self-Esteem)*

Variables	Role Satisfaction			Role Performance			Self-Esteem		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
1997 (n=97)									
(Constant)	3.24	1.03		2.72	.73		24.43	2.89	
Close	.08***	.02	.38	.05***	.02	.36	.17*	.07	.29
Parent									
Age	-.01	.28	.00	.02	.20	.02	.58	.80	.09
Race	-.10	.36	-.03	-.26	.26	-.11	-1.12	1.00	-.12
Marital Status	.14	.32	.05	-.11	.23	-.06	.86	.89	.12
Marital Quality									
Low happy	-.27	.35	-.09	-.09	.25	-.04	-1.96*	1.00	-.24
Happy	-.35	.28	-.16	-.22	.19	-.14	-1.15	.78	-.19
Income									
Low income	.57	.35	.21	.11	.24	.06	.73	.96	.10
Middle income	-.16	.26	-.07	-.16	.18	-.10	-.56	.74	-.09
Education									
High school	-.66	.37	-.23	-.09	.26	-.04	-1.28	1.07	-.16
Some college	-.60*	.28	-.27	-.40*	.20	-.26	-1.15	.81	-.19
Graduate	.16	1.12	.01	.37	.79	.05	1.84	3.08	.06
Health									
Excellent	.38	.37	.15	.05	.26	.03	.86	1.05	.12
Good	.30	.31	.13	-.14	.22	-.09	.13	.86	.02
Child									
Age									
Under 25	-.33	.29	-.13	-.03	.21	-.02	-.10	.82	-.01
Sex (female)	.30	.24	.13	.22	.17	.14	.07	.69	.01
Resides with parents		.15			.09			.11	
Adjusted R^2		2.04			1.56			1.71	
F									

Note. Reference category is under 45, White, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor.
*$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 4.10 (continued) *2000 Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Demographic, Dependent Variables and Closeness Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Self-Esteem)*

Variables	Role Satisfaction			Role Performance			Self-Esteem		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
2000 (n=93)									
(Constant)							25.72	4.08	
Close							.16*	.07	.24
Parent									
Age							.78	1.68	.05
Race							-2.50*	1.09	-.23
Marital Status							-1.09	1.01	-.13
Marital Quality									
Low happy							-3.92***	1.14	-.40
Happy							-1.71*	.74	-.28
Income									
Low income							.03	1.00	.00
Middle income							.59	.69	.10
Education									
High school							.32	.96	.04
Some college							.16	.69	.03
Graduate							2.44	1.98	.12
Health									
Excellent							1.50	.88	.23
Good							.71	.79	.12
Child									
Age									
Under 25							1.07	.62	.18
Sex (female)							-.16	.66	-.03
Resides with parents							-.32	.82	-.04
Adjusted R^2								.21	
F								2.44	

Note. Reference category is under 45, White, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor.
*$p < .05$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 4.10 (continued) *2005 Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Demographic, Dependent Variables and Closeness Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Self-Esteem)*

Variables	Role Satisfaction			Role Performance			Self-Esteem		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
2005 (N=81)									
(Constant)							18.08	2.47	
Close							.30***	.08	.46
Parent									
Marital Status							-.36	.41	-.11
Marital Quality									
Low happy							-1.90	1.61	-.17
Happy							-.59	1.21	-.08
Income									
Low income							-1.46	1.09	-.17
Middle income							-.64	.95	-.08
Education									
High school							1.44	1.32	.14
Some college							.25	.94	.04
Health									
Excellent							-.91	1.29	-.10
Good							-1.55	.93	-.23
Child									
Age									
Under 25							.77	1.76	.05
Sex (female)							.11	.93	.02
Adjusted R^2								.19	
F								1.87	

Note. Reference category is under 45, White, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor.
****p<.001.*

Table 4.11 presents results from 1994-2005 for regression analyses predicting the affect of conflict on role evaluation. Results demonstrated a strong negative relationship between conflict and some dimensions of role evaluation. In 1994, mothers reporting conflict in the relationship were less satisfied (B = -.14, $p < .001$). However, conflict between parents and children did not significantly predict role performance (B = -.03, p = n.s.) and self-esteem (B = -.23, p = n.s.). Results for conflict were also mixed in 1997. The analyses indicated that conflict was negatively related to self-esteem (B = -.29, $p < .01$). However, results for role satisfaction (B=-.10, p = n.s.) and role performance (B = -.04, p = n.s) were not significant. In 2000, conflict did not predict role evaluation, measured as self-esteem (B = -.17, p = n.s). In 2005, self-esteem was negatively related to conflict (B = -.55, $p < .01$).

Results for all control variables are provided in Tables 4.10 and 4.11. No consistent pattern emerged from the relationships between role evaluation and the control variables. It is worth noting that marital quality was most frequently significantly related to role evaluation, indicating that mothers self-reporting low or mid-level happiness in their marriages were less satisfied in their parent role and had lower self-esteem than mothers reporting to be highly happy. In some cases, mothers with a high school or less education or some college were less satisfied in the parent role or had lower self-esteem than college educated parents.

Table 4.11 *1994 Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Demographic, Dependent Variables and Conflict Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Role Satisfaction, Role Performance, and Self-Esteem)*

Variables	Role Satisfaction			Role Performance			Self-Esteem		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
1994 (n=97)									
(Constant)	5.27	1.06		3.23	.57		30.82	3.28	
Close	-.14***	.04	-.36	-.03	.02	-.13	-.23	.12	-.21
Parent									
Age	-.45	.28	-.18	-.18	.15	-.13	-.63	.86	-.09
Race	.29	.52	.06	.22	.28	.08	-.94	1.62	-.07
Marital Status	.54	.35	.17	-.08	.19	-.05	.61	1.10	.07
Marital Quality									
Low happy	-1.01	.41	-.27**	-.35	.22	-.17	-.87	1.26	-.08
Happy	-.21	.27	-.08	-.18	.15	-.13	-.98	.85	-.14
Income									
Low income	-.29	.35	-.11	-.48**	.19	-.33	-.66	1.10	-.09
Middle income	-.47	.28	-.20	-.35*	.15	-.27	-1.74*	.86	-.26
Education									
High school	-.33	.36	-.11	-.15	.20	-.10	-1.97	1.12	-.23
Some college	.06	.27	.02	.08	.15	.06	-.35	.85	-.05
Graduate	-.83	1.15	-.07	-.57	.62	-.09	-.59	3.56	-.02
Health									
Excellent	.08	.35	.03	-.13	.19	-.10	.54	1.10	.07
Good	.19	.33	.08	-.16	.18	-.12	.53	1.01	.08
Child									
Age									
Under 25	.69	.46	.16	.89***	.25	.38	-.46	1.41	-.04
Sex (female)	.13	.26	.05	.23	.14	.17	.51	.80	.07
Resides with parents	.07	.24	.03	-.03	.13	-.02	1.01	.76	.15
Adjusted R^2		.20			.20			.05	
F		2.46			2.47			1.33	

Note. Reference category is under 45, White, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 4.11 (continued) *1997 Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Demographic, Dependent Variables and Conflict Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Role Satisfaction, Role Performance, and Self-Esteem)*

Variables	Role Satisfaction			Role Performance			Self-Esteem		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
1997 (n=97)									
(Constant)	5.19	1.04		3.91	.74		28.97	2.77	
Close	-.08	.05	-.17	-.04	.04	-.13	-.29*	.13	-.23
Parent									
Age	.14	.29	.06	.12	.21	.08	.90	.79	.14
Race	-.08	.38	-.02	-.26	.27	-.10	-1.06	1.02	-.11
Marital Status	.08	.34	.03	-.13	.24	-.07	.67	.90	.10
Marital Quality									
Low happy	-.34	.37	-.11	-.14	.26	-.07	-1.85	1.01	-.23
Happy	-.42	.29	-.19	-.27	.20	-.17	-1.26	.78	-.21
Income									
Low income	.49	.36	.18	.06	.26	.03	.59	.97	.08
Middle income	-.10	.27	-.04	-.12	.19	-.08	-.39	.73	-.06
Education									
High school	-.63	.40	-.22	-.08	.28	-.04	-1.13	1.09	-.14
Some college	-.56	.30	-.25	-.37	.21	-.24	-.99	.81	-.16
Graduate	.32	1.18	.03	.48	.83	.06	2.22	3.11	.08
Health									
Excellent	.70	.38	.27	.26	.27	.15	1.52	1.01	.22
Good	.48	.32	.21	-.02	.23	-.02	.51	.85	.08
Child									
Age									
Under 25	-.39	.31	-.15	-.08	.22	-.04	-.13	.83	-.02
Sex (female)	.52	.26	.23	.36	.18	.22*	.55	.69	.09
Resides with parents	.16	.27	.06	.03	.19	.02	.13	.72	.02
Adjusted R^2		.05			-.01			.10	
F		1.31			.93			1.60	

Note. Reference category is under 45, White, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor.
*$p < .05$.

Table 4.11 (continued) *2000 Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Demographic, Dependent Variables and Conflict Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Self-Esteem)*

Variables	Role Satisfaction			Role Performance			Self-Esteem		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
2000 (n=93)									
(Constant)							29.88	4.07	
Close							-.17	.14	-.15
Parent									
Age							.79	1.71	.05
Race							-2.52*	1.11	-.23
Marital Status							-.81	1.02	-.09
Marital Quality									
Low happy							-4.23***	1.14	-.44
Happy							-2.02**	.73	-.33
Income									
Low income							.06	1.05	.01
Middle income							.67	.70	.11
Education									
High school							.46	.98	.06
Some college							.49	.69	.08
Graduate							2.15	2.02	.11
Health									
Excellent							1.62	.90	.25
Good							.90	.82	.15
Child									
Age									
Under 25							.85	.66	.14
Sex (female)							.20	.65	.03
Resides with parents							-.36	.84	-.04
Adjusted R^2								.18	
F								2.19	

Note. Reference category is under 45, White, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 4.11 (continued) *2005 Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression for Demographic, Dependent Variables and Conflict Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Role Satisfaction, Role Performance, and Self-Esteem)*

Variables	Role Satisfaction			Role Performance			Self-Esteem		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
2005 (N=81)									
(Constant)							27.42	1.64	
Conflict							-.57**	.19	-.38
Parent									
Marital Status							-.55	.43	-.17
Marital Quality									
Low happy							-1.43	1.68	-.13
Happy							-.43	1.28	-.06
Income									
Low income							-1.47	1.14	-.17
Middle income							-.26	.99	-.03
Education									
High school							1.31	1.38	.13
Some college							.33	.98	.05
Health									
Excellent							-1.26	1.34	-.13
Good							-1.56	.97	-.23
Child									
Age									
Under 25							1.20	1.83	.09
Sex (female)									
Resides with parents							1.28	1.01	.19
Adjusted R^2							-1.16	2.44	-.06
F								.11	
								1.52	

Note. Reference category is under 45, White, married, highly happy, college, high income, and poor.
***p* < .01.

In summary, cross-sectional regression analyses were used to examine the relationship between the perceived quality of parent-child relationships (levels of closeness and conflict) and parental role evaluation (role satisfaction, role performance, and self-esteem). Analyses show

that role satisfaction, role performance and parental self-esteem are positively related to closeness. These results are consistent at all data collection points. Conversely, conflict is negatively related to role satisfaction and self-esteem, but is not significant for role performance.

Tables 4.12-4.15 present the results of the longitudinal analyses. Table 4.12 displays the descriptive sample characteristics of mothers. Similar to mothers responding at any year, mothers in the two consecutive year sample are predominantly White, married, report being happily married, middle income or higher, have at least some college education, and are in good health.

Table 4.12 *Demographic Characteristics by year*

		Year							
		1994		1997		2000		2005	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Measure									
Parent									
Age	1	86	69.9%	67	67.0%	66	65.3%	64	68.1%
	2	37	30.1%	33	33.0%	35	34.7%	30	31.9%
	Total	123	100.0%	100	100.0%	101	100.0%	94	100.0%
Married	no	17	13.8%	14	14.0%	15	14.9%	13	13.8%
	yes	106	86.2%	86	86.0%	86	85.1%	81	86.2%
	Total	123	100.0%	100	100.0%	101	100.0%	94	100.0%
Marital quality	1	37	34.9%	30	34.9%	29	33.7%	29	35.4%
	2	69	65.1%	56	65.1%	57	66.3%	53	64.6%
	Total	106	100.0%	86	100.0%	86	100.0%	82	100.0%
Income	1	76	63.9%	63	64.9%	61	62.2%	58	63.7%
	2	43	36.1%	34	35.1%	37	37.8%	33	36.3%
	Total	119	100.0%	97	100.0%	98	100.0%	91	100.0%
Health	1	35	28.7%	32	32.0%	32	31.7%	23	24.7%
	2	62	50.8%	49	49.0%	48	47.5%	52	55.9%
	3	25	20.5%	19	19.0%	21	20.8%	18	19.4%
	Total	122	100.0%	100	100.0%	101	100.0%	93	100.0%

Note. Age (1 is under 45, 2 is 46 and over). Married (1 is not married, 2 is married). Marital quality (1 is not happy, 2 is happy). Income (1 is $40,000 and under, 2 is over $41,000). Health (1 is poor, 2 is good, 3 is excellent).

Tables 4.13 and 4.14 show that the means of the dependent and independent variables and demographic variables are consistent from 1994 to 2005, however, the sample size decreases.

Table 4.13 *Means and Standard Deviations of Self-Esteem and Closeness and Conflict by Year*

	Year											
	1994			1997			2000			2005		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Self-Esteem	123	27	3	100	27	3	101	18	2	94	27	4
Close	123	23	5	100	.	.	101	23	5	94	23	5
Conflict	123	7	3	100	.	.	101	6	2	94	6	3

Table 4.14 *Self-Esteem and Independent Variables by Demographic Characteristics and Year*

		Year											
		1994 Self-Esteem			1997 Self-Esteem			2000 Self-Esteem			2005 Self-Esteem		
		N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Parent													
Age	1	86	27	3	67	27	3	66	18	2	64	27	4
	2	37	26	3	33	27	4	35	18	2	30	27	4
	Total	123	27	3	100	27	3	101	18	2	94	27	4
Married	no	17	26	4	14	28	3	15	17	1	13	26	4
	yes	106	27	3	86	27	3	86	18	2	81	27	4
	Total	123	27	3	100	27	3	101	18	2	94	27	4
Marital Quality	1	37	26	3	30	26	3	29	18	3	29	25	4
	2	69	28	3	56	28	3	57	18	2	53	27	3
	Total	106	27	3	86	27	3	86	18	2	82	27	4
Income	1	76	26	3	63	27	3	61	18	2	58	26	3
	2	43	27	3	34	28	3	37	18	2	33	28	4
	Total	119	27	3	97	27	3	98	18	2	91	27	4
Health	1	35	27	4	32	28	3	32	18	1	23	28	3
	2	62	26	3	49	27	3	48	18	2	52	26	4
	3	25	26	3	19	26	3	21	18	3	18	27	4
	Total	122	27	3	100	27	3	101	18	2	93	27	4

Note. Age (1 is under 45, 2 is 46 and over). Married (1 is not married, 2 is married). Marital quality (1 is not happy, 2 is happy). Income (1 is $40,000 and under, 2 is over $41,000). Health (1 is poor, 2 is good, 3 is excellent).

Table 4.15 presents the unbalanced pattern of respondent participation in the data; 82% of available mothers were represented in the data in at least two consecutive years.

Table 4.15 *Pattern of Longitudinal Data by Year*

Frequency	Percent	Cum	Pattern
66	52.38	52.38	1111
16	12.70	65.08	111.
15	11.90	76.98	11.1
13	10.32	87.30	1.1.
8	6.35	93.65	1..1
5	3.97	97.62	1.11
2	1.59	99.21	.1..
1	0.79	100.0	.11.
126	100.0		

Results of fixed effects estimation for the longitudinal analyses are presented in Tables 4.16 and 4.17. Table 4.16 presents the results of parent-child closeness on mother's role evaluation. These results show that close parent-child relationships positively affect mothers' self-esteem. Quantitatively, a one unit increase in closeness in the parent-child relationship leads to a 0.13 increase in self-esteem for mothers. Given that the average self-esteem score is 22.79 this change corresponds to 2.9 % of the average score, which is somewhat small. Regarding time (year) effect, compared to year 2005, self-esteem decreases by 8.75 in 2000. Yet, it increases by 0.12 in 1994, although this is not statistically significant. This time pattern indicates a reverse triangle shape (1994↑2000↓2005↑). However, relative to age, there is no difference in the change in self-esteem between under and over 45 year old age groups. Compared to mothers over 45 years old there is a statistically insignificant increase in self-esteem for mothers under 45 years old. In addition, the other time variant variables did not predict change in mothers' self-esteem. Thus, these results support Hypothesis 2 that over time self-esteem increases as closeness in the parent-child relationship increases.

Table 4.16 *Fixed Effects Model Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Self-Esteem) from Closeness in Parent-Child Relationship Scores*

Variables	B	SE
Intercept	24.19***	1.09
Year		
1994	.11	.33
2000	-8.74***	.48
Close parent-child relationship	.13***	.03
Age-under 45 years old	.27	.38
Marital Status-not married	-.55	1.55
Marital Quality- low marital quality	-.35	.38
Income- under $45,000	-.26	.36
Health		
Excellent	.06	.49
Good	-.52	.47
Effect Size	.12	
N= 102		

Note. Reference categories are year 2005, over 45 years old, married, high marital quality, income over $45,000, and poor health. Effect size was calculated by using the coefficient for conflict divided by the overall standard deviation for self-esteem (Maldonado, 2012).
***$p < .001$.

Table 4.17 presents the results of the effect of parent-child conflict on parent's role evaluation. These results show that conflict in parent-child relationships negatively affects mothers' self-esteem. Quantitatively, for mothers, a one unit increase in conflict in the parent-child relationship leads to a 0.21 decrease in self-esteem. Given that the average self-esteem score is 6.41 this change corresponds to 1.34 % of the average score, which is somewhat small. Regarding time (year) effect, compared to year 2005, self-esteem decreases by 8.69 in 2000. It increases by 0.35 in 1994, but this is not statistically significant. Similar to closeness in the parent-child relationship, this time pattern indicates a reverse triangle shape (1994↑2000↓2005↑). However, as with closeness, relative to age, there is no difference in its change between under and over 45 year old age groups. Compared to mothers over 45 years old there is a statistically insignificant increase in self-esteem for mothers under 45 years old. The other time variant variables also did

not predict change in mothers' self-esteem. Over time, self-esteem increases as conflict in the parent-child relationship decreases, supporting Hypothesis 3.

Table 4.17 *Fixed Effects Model Predicting Mother's Role Evaluation (Self-Esteem) from Conflict in Parent-Child Relationship Scores*

Variables	B	SE
Intercept	28.53***	.70
Year		
1994	.35	.34
2000	-8.69***	.48
Conflict in parent-child relationship	-.21***	.06
Age-under 45 years old	.10	.38
Marital Status-not married	-.06	1.53
Marital Quality- low marital quality	-.46	.38
Income- under $45,000	-.37	.36
Health		
Excellent	.29	.49
Good	-.48	.47
Effect Size	-0.3	
N= 102		

Note. Reference categories are year 2005, over 45 years old, married, high marital quality, income over $45,000, and poor health. Effect size was calculated by using the coefficient for conflict divided by the overall standard deviation for self-esteem (Maldonado, 2012).
***$p < .001$.

This study examined the effect of closeness and conflict in the parent-child relationship on mothers' reports of role satisfaction, role performance, and self-esteem. In all years, closeness positively predicted all measures of role evaluation. Conversely, conflict only predicted role evaluation as measured by role satisfaction in 1994 and self-esteem in 1997 and 2005. Longitudinal analyses conducted to examine change in self-esteem and the quality of the parent-child relationship found that during the ten year span between 1994 and 2005, self-esteem fluctuates; it follows a curvilinear pattern. This means that at the beginning of the launching stage (1994) self-esteem was the high, hit a low in 2000, and was on its way back up in 2005.

Therefore, from 1994 to 2005 self-esteem changed even as closeness increased and conflict decreased.

Discussion

An important contribution of this study is that it establishes the launching stage as a critical period for growth and development in the relationship between parents and young adult offspring. As predicted, the finding that close parent-child relationships positively affect mothers' self-esteem during the time period covering the late teens to late twenties is in the direction of greater closeness. These results are consistent with earlier studies (Blieszner & Mancini, 1987; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Young et al., 2008). The somewhat small mean change in self-esteem (2.9%) suggests that even though over time it does change, self-esteem is a relatively stable dimension of wellbeing. That age is not statistically significant further supports this conclusion. As reported, mothers' self-esteem was not affected by age, specifically as they moved from the under 45 to over age 45 group.

Results of the present study also support the hypothesis that conflict decreases during the launching stage. However, consistent with the impact of close parent-child relationships, the effect of conflict between parents and children on mothers' self-esteem is somewhat small. The most likely explanations for decreased conflict are offered by symbolic interactionism and conflict theory. For example, from symbolic interactionism, the beginning of the launching stage may signal a increased role making that results in a profound shift in the actual responsibility parents have had for their children, as well as in the sense of responsibility that they feel for them (Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972). If this is so, according to conflict theory, as the balance of power and control in the parent-young adult child relationship shifts away from parents, they may adapt by relinquishing control, thus decreasing power struggles. As parents allow their young adult children greater latitude in decision-making, the relationship can focus on negotiating a more adult-like relationship rather than on managing fights over autonomy and independence.

The time effect pattern, which indicates a reverse triangle shape, supports prior literature which finds that the parent-child relationship is not static or fixed (Nelson, et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 1995). Nonetheless, the modest fluctuation in self-esteem is difficult to explain. Obvious explanations for the rise in self-esteem following its decline which could be offered by covariates, such as marital quality and mothers' health, provide little insight because these variables were statistically insignificant. Development in the parent-child relationship suggests a possible explanation in what I term the 'honeymoon glow'. The honeymoon glow is the period in which launching mothers initially feel a sense of relief for having 'completed' child-rearing (increased self-esteem). This period is then followed by the unexpected reality that while parenting as they have known it may be over, the relationship is ongoing and requires negotiation (decreased self-esteem). Successful negotiations then lead to increased closeness between parents and children and increased self-esteem for mothers.

Findings from prior literature suggest that the notion of the honeymoon glow has some validity. First, it is well-established that the launching stage is generally more satisfying (thus, positively affecting self-esteem) than earlier parenting stages (Gullette, 2002; Lye, 1996; Pasley & Gecas, 1984; Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2011). Related to the focus of this study, for mothers, increased self-esteem in the launching stage may be due to relief from feeling ineffective and incompetent during the adolescent stage when conflicts between parents and children reach their peak (Pasley & Gecas, 1984). Further, being sought out for emotional, but not functional, support allows mothers to have an important ongoing role without the pressure of day-to-day responsibilities, thereby also increasing self-esteem (Dillaway, 2006; Francis-Connolly, 2000; Gullette, 2002). Aside from financial contributions, emotional support, an important indicator of closeness in the parent-child relationship, is the most common type of assistance exchanged between parents and adult children (Francis-Connolly, 2000; Lye, 1996; Silverstein et al., 2002). The invitation to provide such support can indicate a close positive

relationship with young adult children and for some mothers is the reward for earlier parenting investments (Francis-Connolly, 2000).

Although the results of the current study did not find increased conflict, prior literature does find that as parents and young adult children negotiate a more peer-like relationship conflict increases and then levels off (Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Young et al., 2008). This could account for the upswing in self-esteem following its decline. Therefore, it is clear that the change in mothers' self-esteem is not linear. Furthermore, even though its affect may be relatively small, increased closeness and decreased conflict between parents and children plays an important role in the development of mothers' self-esteem.

In summary, the results of this study contribute to launching stage literature by finding that the quality of the parent-child relationship changes over time, positively impacting maternal self-esteem. This study establishes that closeness increases and conflict decreases. These are correlated suggesting that they increase and decrease in relation to each other; decreased conflict is linked with increased closeness and vice versa.

Limitations

Though the scales for closeness and conflict are known to have internal validity (Longitudinal Study of Generations, 2012), it should be noted that the present study has limitations in terms of its external validity. First, the study lacks generalizability to parents in the launching stage as a whole because of the lack of cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographical diversity in the sample. Additionally, the study suffers from measurement validity problems: (a) two measurements used to operationalize role evaluation (role satisfaction and role performance) were available only in two years of the data, and (b) self-esteem, though in all waves, was a proxy for role evaluation. A scale designed to specifically measure role evaluation could better detect emotional subtleties that this study may have missed, e.g. possible parental reluctance to admit conflicts due to their investment in their offspring.

Future Research and Implications

The results of this study support hypotheses that the quality of the parent-child relationship during the launching stage is important to parents and that the primary work of parents is to provide emotional support. These results can be expanded by studying diverse populations. For example, there is much we do not know about the experiences of parents of various cultural and ethnic groups, parents with limited financial resources, and relatives and guardians who have raised children to the launching stage. Other unexplored, but important ways to examine this topic is to research diverse family structures (e.g. the birth position of the launching child, step-parents, and single parents). Though a major methodological challenge, qualitative longitudinal studies analyses could offer rich understanding of the impact of timing by tracking changes in role evaluation as parents progress through the launching stage.

Despite these limitations, this study adds to what is known about parents in the launching stage. This study's critical finding is that the emotional bond between parents and children does not suffer during the extended launching stage, even as they learn new interaction patterns. The major implication of these results is that they offer direction for educational and intervention-focused programming. That mothers report increasing levels of closeness indicates that they are ongoing 'invested participants' (Francis-Connolly, 2000). Functional support may decrease over time, but emotional support appears to be life-long. Therefore, the period leading up to the launching stage, as well as, the transition itself, is an opportune time for professional practitioners to build on families' inherent bent toward maintaining connection by providing skills training to parents with a focus on listening to young adults (Young et al., 2008). Practitioners can also provide information and training well before the launching stage to guide parents' preparation for governance transference, transferring day-to-day responsibilities to young adults (Young et al., 2008). Additionally, research-based information describing positive and challenging aspects of launching will help to normalize feelings of loss.

Conclusion

Parents invest heavily in the development of children in many ways. The launching stage, while not a 'turning point' in the true sense of the definition offered by the life course perspective, does seem to be an apt time to reflect on the parenting role to-date. The present study sought to examine parental experiences during the launching stage of parenthood, focusing on the relationship between how mothers evaluate the parent role in terms of how they rate satisfaction, appraise performance, and rate competency and failure (global measures of self-esteem) and the quality of the parent-child relationship. The findings showing sustained closeness and decreased conflict in the relationship are heartening considering that this transitional period sets the stage for later older parent-adult child interactions. Given the popular interest in the extended transition to adulthood, studies such as the present work, contribute to our empirical understanding about the impact of the extended launching stage on maternal wellbeing. It seems that launching stage parents live with a duality—they have a strong emotional connection to their young adult children, while feeling not quite successful in their performance as parents.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY

Parents experience developmental growth throughout parenthood, but during the launching stage the parent role undergoes major redefinition. Parenting patterns and practices developed at this time may have implications for the course of future parent-child interactions. Despite the importance of this stage of parenthood, there are few guidelines for helping parents navigate the challenges. For these reasons, it was important to understand normative transition processes that predict healthy outcomes for parents involved in launching their children. The purpose of this research was to investigate the effect of changes in key areas on parental emotional wellbeing. Chapter one provided the overview for this three manuscript dissertation. It also provided the background definitions for concepts used in these chapters: parent development, stages, transitions, and continuity and change in the parental emotional wellbeing, the quality of the parent-child relationship, and parent support.

Summary Findings

The aim of Chapter two, manuscript one, "The Extended Launching Stage: Does it Matter to Parents' Wellbeing?" was to investigate the consequences of the extended launching stage to parents. This exploratory study used a historical perspective to make cohort comparisons between parents who were in the late-launching phase in 1985 and in 2005. Using data from the Longitudinal Study of Generations (LSOG), this research examined the effect of parent support (defined as providing help with financial support, information and advice, emotional support, and discussing important life decisions) and closeness in the parent-child relationship on parental emotional wellbeing. The focus was on how these effects would differ between cohorts. It was expected that there would be sample characteristic differences between1985 and 2005, but that there would be no change in parent emotional wellbeing. Demographic analyses, correlations, and means were made to compare 1985 and 2005 cohorts. Cross-sectional regressions were used to measure the association between parent support and parental wellbeing for 1985 and 2005.

The results show that the 2005 parent cohort provided more support, had lower wellbeing, and did not feel as close to offspring.

Chapter three, manuscript two, "The Effect of Parent Support and Offspring Goal Achievement on Maternal Wellbeing During the Launching Stage" examined parent support over the course of the launching stage and investigated its impact on maternal emotional wellbeing. A major parenting task during the launching stage is for parents to decrease functional support as young adult offspring attain adult status goals. The position of this study was that even when this process occurs smoothly or on-time, helping children who are no longer children chronologically, but who also are not fully autonomous adults creates parental strain. Two major hypotheses were: (a) there was a positive relationship between increased goal achievement and decreased parent support and (b) parental emotional wellbeing increased as goal attainment increased and parent support decreased. Cross-sectional regression was used to test the relationship between support and maternal wellbeing, and adult status goals and wellbeing. Longitudinal fixed effects models were used to determine the effect of change in parent support and offspring progress in attaining adult status goals on maternal wellbeing over time. The informative, but unexpected results of these analyses were that wellbeing was positively affected by support, and not impacted by offspring's attainment of adult status goals.

Finally, the premise of Chapter four, manuscript three, "The Effect of the Quality of the Parent-Child Relationship on Role Evaluation during the Launching Stage" was that a primary task of parenting during the launching stage of parenthood is to evaluate or appraise one's performance as a parent. Traditionally, parent success or failure has been tied to child achievement of adult status goals, such as employment, completed schooling, and marriage. However, the current extended young adult transition to adulthood has delayed their achievement of traditional goals. In light of these delays, the aim of this research was to investigate the quality of the parent-child relationship as the present-day standard by which mothers self-evaluate. I hypothesized that relationship quality, particularly conflict, was related to parent evaluations.

This study used cross-section ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to test the strength of the relationship between the quality of the parent-child relationship, in terms of closeness and conflict, and parent evaluation in four time waves, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. Fixed effects models were used to estimate change in role evaluation, measured as self-esteem, and quality of the parent-child relationship (closeness and conflict) at four data collection points, 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2005. Results of these analyses supported hypotheses that over time self-esteem and closeness increase and conflict decreases. These increases were not linear, but followed a pattern of ups and downs, with self-esteem increasing in late launching.

In summary, the findings suggest that there is good news and bad news. First, the good news: for parents (mothers) wellbeing and self-esteem increase over time. Nevertheless, the bad news is that when compared with their parents they are not faring well. The findings, relative to contemporary parents indicate: (a) that continued support does not negatively impact maternal wellbeing, and (b) that how mothers feel about themselves in the parent role is affected by the quality of the parent-child relationship, and that this fluctuates over the course of the stage

Significance of Study

This research was primarily exploratory. It began with ideas about the launching experiences of contemporary parents that were based on anecdotal accounts, theory, and sparse empirical findings. While I expected the extended launching stage to negatively impact parental wellbeing, given the resiliency of families and changes in parenting priorities, I considered that there was a good chance that present day families were transitioning just fine. The results of this study show support for both expectations.

The longitudinal research design enabled me to compare between-subject experiences, as well as within-subject changes. In terms of between-subject findings, this research allowed a rare comparison of parent cohorts' self-reports at the same point in their life course. This comparison is significant because the literature on parents in the launching stage from earlier generations is limited; not much is known about their wellbeing, feelings of closeness to their young adult

offspring, and feelings about supporting these offspring. The findings have gerontological significance for scholars and practitioners. A major life stage task of elderly family members is to reminisce or review salient life roles, including parenting. The benefit for those conducting life review workshops is in having empirical evidence based on actual self-reports versus memories. This is the major advantage of this research; the analyses took place during the time when these parents were launching versus as a retrospective study when memories of and judgments about their experiences might have confounded results. The findings offer an excellent prompt for individual and family discussions about family relations. It's important to have evidence that shows that this cohort, who has been described as not particularly emotionally expressive, still reported feeling closer to their young adult offspring than the later cohort.

Other significance of this study lies in understanding the complexity of the launching stage. In terms of social expectations, both legally and informally, post- child rearing means post-parenting. Nevertheless, we know anecdotally and this research bears out, that that is not the case. Parenting continues after adolescence in the form of supportive parenting. This research provides background understanding of behaviors and consequences involved in supportive parenting, which are different from active parenting. Future research can expand these findings and provide the empirical basis for parenting curricula. In addition, these results can help to shape societal expectations and serve to formalize guidelines for normative, adaptive launching.

Finally, from a theoretical perspective, this research highlights the importance of sociohistorical context for determining transitional outcomes. The life course perspective can be more closely examined for helping to understand conditions that contribute to the experiences of past and contemporary parents. Dialogues, in the form of focus groups, between the older and younger parent cohort could elucidate their experiences and expectations relative to launching.

This study's findings answers as well as raises questions regarding the impact of extended launching. The complexity of this stage may be unavoidable. As is true for all other parenthood

stages, the launching stage as the family transition from active to supportive parenting has unique joys and challenges.

REFERENCES

Aldous, J. (1978). *Family careers: Developmental change in families*. New York: Wiley.

Aldous, J. (1990). Family development and the life course: Two perspectives on family change. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 571-583.

Alwin, D. F. (1989). Changes in qualities valued in children in the United States, 1964 to 1984. *Social Science Research*, *18*(3), 195-236.

Allen, K. R., Blieszner, R., & Roberto, K. A. (2000). Families in the middle and later years: A review and critique of research in the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *62*(4), 911-926.

Ames, B. D. (1999). Lifecourse parenting: The primary intergenerational relationship. *Info: Ann Arbor, MI: MPublshing, University of Michigan Library*, *4*(1).

Arias, E. (2011). United States life tables, 2007. *National vital statistics reports: from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System*, *59*(9), 1.

Arnett, J. J., & Taber, S. (1994). Adolescence terminable and interminable: When does adolescence end?. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *23*(5), 517-537.

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American psychologist*, *55*(5), 469.

Arnett, J. J. (2001). Conceptions of the transition to adulthood: Perspectives from adolescence through midlife. *Journal of adult development*, *8*(2), 133-143. doi: 1068-0667/01/0400-0133

Arnett, J. J. (2007). Emerging adulthood: What is it, and what is it good for?. *Child development perspectives*, *1*(2), 68-73.

Aycicegi-Dinn, A., & Kagitcibasi, C. (2010). The Value of Children for Parents in the Minds of Emerging Adults. *Cross-Cultural Research*, *44*(2), 174-205. doi:10.1177/1069397109358389

Bengtson, V. L. (2001). Beyond the nuclear family: The increasing importance of multigenerational bonds. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *63*(1), 1-16. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00001.x

Bengtson, V. L., & Kuypers, J. A. (1971). Generational difference and the developmental stake. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, *2*(4), 249-260.

Bengtson, V. L. & Allen, K. R. (2009). The life course perspective applied to families over time. In P. Boss, W.J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W.R. Schumm, & S.K. Steinmetz (Eds.) *Sourcebook of family theories and methods a contextual approach* (pp. 225-254). New York, NY:Springer.

Black, B. P., Holditch-Davis, D., & Miles, M. S. (2009). Life course theory as a framework to examine becoming a mother of a medically fragile preterm infant. *Research in nursing & health*, *32*(1), 38-49. doi: 10.1002/nur.20298

Blacker, L. (2005). The launching phase of the life cycle. In B. Carter & M. McGoldrick (Eds.), *The expanded family cycle* (pp. 287-306). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Blieszner, R., & Mancini, J. A. (1987). Enduring ties: Older adults' parental role and responsibilities. *Family Relations*, 176-180.

Blumer, H. (1966). Sociological implications of the thought of George Herbert Mead. *American journal of sociology*, *71*(5), 535.

Blunter, H. (1994). Society as symbolic interaction. *Symbolic Interaction: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 263.

Blythe, C. (2010). Social work practice and life course development: Transition and conformity?. *Neo: A Journal of Student Research*, *1*(1).

Boyd, M., & Pryor, E. T. (1989). The cluttered nest: The living arrangements of young Canadian adults. *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 461-477.

Butler, S. S., Turner, W., Kaye, L. W., Ruffin, L., & Downey, R. (2005). Depression and caregiver burden among rural elder caregivers. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, *46*(1), 47-63.

Connidis, I. A., & McMullin, J. A. (1993). To have or have not: Parent status and the subjective wellbeing of older men and women. *The Gerontologist*, *33*(5), 630-636.

Cowan, P.A. (1991). Individual and family life transitions: A proposal for a new definition. In Cowan, P. A., & Hetherington, E. M. (Eds.). (1991). *Family transitions,* (Vol. 2, pp.3-30). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Cowan, C. P., & Cowan, P. A. (1995). Interventions to ease the transition to parenthood: Why they are needed and what they can do. *Family Relations*, 412-423.

Craig, L., Powell, A., & Brown, J. E. (2014). Co-resident parents and young people aged 15–34: Who does what housework?. *Social Indicators Research*, 1-20. doi: 10.1007/s11205-014-0643-5

Danziger, S., & Rouse, C. E. (Eds.). (2008). *The price of independence: The economics of early adulthood*. Russell Sage Foundation.

DeVries, H. M., Kerrick, S., & Oetinger, M. (2007). Satisfactions and regrets of midlife parents: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Adult Development*, *14*(1-2), 6-15.

Dillaway, H. E. (2006). Good mothers never wane: Mothering at menopause. *Journal of Women & Aging*, *18*(2), 41-53.

Effland, A. W. (2005). Agrarianism and child labor policy for agriculture. *Agricultural History*, *79*(3), 281-297.

Elder Jr., G. H. (1985). Life course dynamics: trajectories and transitions 1968-1980.

Elder Jr., G. H. (1994). Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives on the life course. *Social psychology quarterly*, 4-15.

Elder, G. H. (1998). The life course as developmental theory. *Child development*, *69*(1), 1-12.

Evenson, R. J., & Simon, R. W. (2005). Clarifying the relationship between parenthood and depression. *Journal of health and Social Behavior*, *46*(4), 341-358.

Farrington, K., & Chertok, E. (1993). Social conflict theories of the family. In *Sourcebook of family theories and methods* (pp. 357-384). Springer US.

Fingerman, K. L., Pitzer, L., Lefkowitz, E. S., Birditt, K. S., & Mroczek, D. (2008). Ambivalent relationship qualities between adults and their parents: Implications for the wellbeing of both parties. *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, *63*(6), 362-371.

Fingerman, K., Miller, L., Birditt, K., & Zarit, S. (2009). Giving to the good and the needy: Parental support of grown children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *71*(5), 1220-1233. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00665.x

Fingerman, K. L., Pillemer, K. A., Silverstein, M., & Suitor, J. J. (2012). The baby boomers' intergenerational relationships. *The Gerontologist*, *52*(2), 199-209. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnr139

Fingerman, K. L., Cheng, Y. P., Birditt, K., & Zarit, S. (2012). Only as happy as the least happy child: Multiple grown children's problems and successes and middle-aged parents' well-being. *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, *67*(2), 184-193. doi: 10.1093/geronb/gbr086

Fingerman, K. L., Cheng, Y. P., Wesselmann, E. D., Zarit, S., Furstenberg, F., & Birditt, K. S. (2012). Helicopter parents and landing pad kids: Intense parental support of grown children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *74*(4), 880-896. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.00987.x

Flanagan, C., Osgood, D.W., Foster, E.M., & Cusick, G.R. (2008). The transition to adulthood for vulnerable populations. *National Council on Family Relations: Report, 53*(1), F5-F6.

Francis-Connolly, E. (2000). Toward an understanding of mothering: A comparison of two motherhood stages. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *54*(3), 281-289. doi:10.5014/ajot.54.3.281

Furstenberg, F. F. (2008). The intersections of social class and the transition to adulthood. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, *2008*(119), 1-10. doi: 10.1002/cd.205

Furstenberg, F. (2008). The changing landscape of early adulthood in the U.S. *National Council on Family Relations: Report, 53*(1), F1-F2, F18.

Furstenberg Jr., F. F. (2010). On a new schedule: Transitions to adulthood and family change. *The future of children*, *20*(1), 67-87. doi: 10.1353/foc.0.0038

Furstenberg, F. F., Rumbaut, R. G., & Settersten, R. A. (2005). On the frontier of adulthood: Emerging themes and new directions. *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research, and public policy*, 3-25.

Galinsky, E. (1987). The six stages of parenthood. Reading, MA*: Perseus Books.*

George, L. K. (1993). Sociological perspectives on life transitions. *Annual review of sociology*, 353-373.

Giarrusso, R., Du, F., & Bengtson, V. L. (2004). The intergenerational-stake phenomenon over 20 years. *Annual review of gerontology and geriatrics*, *24*(1), 55-76.

Goldscheider, F., & Goldscheider, C. (1999). *The changing transition to adulthood: Leaving and returning home* (Vol. 17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Goldscheider, F. K., Thornton, A., & Yang, L. S. (2001). Helping out the kids: Expectations about parental support in young adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *63*(3), 727-740. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00727.x

Greenfield, E. A., & Marks, N. F. (2006). Linked lives: Adult children's problems and their parents' psychological and relational well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *68*(2), 442-454. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00727.x

Gullette, M. M. (2002). Valuing "Postmaternity" as a revolutionary feminist concept. *Feminist Studies*, *28*(3), 553-572.

Hartnett, C. S., Furstenberg, F. F., Birditt, K. S., & Fingerman, K. L. (2013). Parental support during young adulthood why does assistance decline with age?. *Journal of family issues*, *34*(7), 975-1007. doi: 10.1177/0192513X12454657

Hay, E. L., Fingerman, K. L., & Lefkowitz, E. S. (2007). The experience of worry in parent–adult child relationships. *Personal relationships*, *14*(4), 605-622. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2007.00174.x

Hendry, L. B., & Kloep, M. (2007). Conceptualizing emerging adulthood: Inspecting the emperor's new clothes?. *Child Development Perspectives*, *1*(2), 74-79. doi: 10.1111/j.1750-8606.2007.00017.x

Herzog, A. R., Rodgers, W. L., & Woodworth, J. (1982). Subjective well-being among different age groups. Ann Arbor, Ml: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan.

Hill, R. (1986). Life cycle stages for types of single parent families: Of family development theory. *Family Relations*, 19-29.

Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American journal of sociology*, 597-606.

Johnson, P., & Wilkinson, W. K. (1995). The" re-nesting" effect: implications for family development. *The Family Journal*, *3*(2), 126-131.

Kaufman, G., & Uhlenberg, P. (1998). Effects of life course transitions on the quality of relationships between adult children and their parents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 924-938.

Kefalas, M.J. & Carr, P.J. (2008). Hollowing out the middle: How young people became the heartland's most precious declining resource. *National Council on Family Relations: Report, 53*(1), F9-F10, F19.

Kempen, G. I. J. M. (1992). Psychometric properties of Bradburn's Affect Balance Scale among elderly persons. *Psychological reports*, *70*(2), 638-638.

Kenyon, D. B. (2008). Individuation from parents during the transition to college. *National Council on Family Relations: Report, 53*(1), F13-F14.

Keresteš, G., Brković, I., & Jagodić, G. K. (2012). Predictors of psychological well-being of adolescents' parents. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *13*(6), 1073-1089. doi: 10.1007/s10902-011-9307-1

Kim, K. A., & Mueller, D. J. (2001). To balance or not to balance: Confirmatory factor analysis of the affect-balance scale. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *2*(3), 289-306. doi: 10.1023/A:1013519931082

Knoester, C. (2003). Transitions in young adulthood and the relationship between parent and offspring well-being. *Social Forces*, *81*(4), 1431-1458. doi: 10.1353/sof.2003.0063

Koepke, S., & Denissen, J. J. (2012). Dynamics of identity development and separation–individuation in parent–child relationships during adolescence and emerging adulthood–A conceptual integration. *Developmental Review*, *32*(1), 67-88.

Koropeckyj-Cox, T. (2002). Beyond parental status: Psychological well-being in middle and old age. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *64*(4), 957-971. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2002.00957.x

Lachman, M. E. (2004). Development in midlife. *Annual Review of Psychology.*, *55*, 305-331. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.55.090902.141521

LaRossa, R., & Reitzes, D. C. (1993). Symbolic interactionism and family studies. In *Sourcebook of family theories and methods* (pp. 135-166). Springer US.

LaRossa, R., & Sinha, C. B. (2006). Constructing the transition to parenthood*. *Sociological inquiry*, *76*(4), 433-457. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-682X.2006.00165.x

La Valley, A. G., & Guerrero, L. K. (2012). Perceptions of conflict behavior and relational satisfaction in adult parent–child relationships a dyadic analysis from an attachment perspective. *Communication Research*, *39*(1), 48-78. doi: 10.1177/0093650210391655

Lewis, C. A., McCollam, P., & Joseph, S. (2000). Convergent validity of the depression-happiness scale with the Bradburn affect balance scale. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, *28*(6), 579-584. doi**:** http://dx.doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2000.28.6.579

Lomranz, J. (1995). 'Thus we live, forever taking leave': The launching stage in the Israeli family. *Social Behavior And Personality*, *23*(3), 287-302. doi:10.2224/sbp.1995.23.3.287

Longitudinal Study of Generations. (2012). *A survey of family relations over the life course, 1971-2005*. Unpublished manuscript.

Lowenthal, M. F., & Chiriboga, D. (1972). Transition to the empty nest: Crisis, challenge, or relief?. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, *26*(1), 8.

Lüscher, K., & Pillemer, K. (1998). Intergenerational ambivalence: A new approach to the study of parent-child relations in later life. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 413-425.

Lye, D. N. (1996). Adult child–parent relationships. *Annual review of sociology*, 79-102.

Maldonado, L. G. (2012). *Linear mixed-effects models: Applications to the behavioral sciences and adolescent community health* (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida).

McAdoo, H. P. (2002). African American parenting. In Bornstein, M. (Eds). *Handbook of parenting*, Volume 4 Social Conditions and Applied Parenting (pp. 47-58). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

McLanahan, S., & Adams, J. (1986). Parenthood and psychological well-being. *Annual review of sociology*, 237-257.

Milkie, M. A., Bierman, A., & Schieman, S. (2008). How adult children influence older parents' mental health: Integrating stress-process and life-course perspectives. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *71*(1), 86-105.

Mitchell, B. A. (2004). Home, but not alone: Socio-cultural and economic aspects of Canadian young adults sharing parental households. *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice*, *28*(2), 115-125.

Mitchell, B. A. (2006). Changing courses: The pendulum of family transitions in comparative perspective. *Journal of comparative family studies*, 325-343.

Mitchell, B. A., & Gee, E. M. (1996). " Boomerang kids" and midlife parental marital satisfaction. *Family Relations*, 442-448.

Mitchell, B.A. & Lovegreen, L.D. (2009). The empty nest syndrome in midlife families: A multimethod exploration of parental gender differences and cultural dynamics. *Journal of Family Issues, 30*(12), 1651-1670. doi: 10.1177/0192513x09339020

Modell, J., Furstenberg, F. F., & Hershberg, T. (1976). Social change and transitions to adulthood in historical perspective. *Journal of Family History*, *1*(1), 7-32.

Modell, J., Furstenberg, F. F., & Strong, D. (1978). The timing of marriage in the transition to adulthood: continuity and change, 1860-1975. *The American Journal of Sociology*, *84*, S120-S150.

Nelson, L. J., Padilla-Walker, L. M., Christensen, K. J., Evans, C. A., & Carroll, J. S. (2011). Parenting in emerging adulthood: An examination of parenting clusters and correlates. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, *40*(6), 730-743. doi:10.1007/s10964-010-9584-8

Neugarten, L. (1979). Time, age, and the life cycle. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, *136*(7).

Palkovitz, R. (1996). Parenting as a generator of adult development: Conceptual issues and implications. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *13*(4), 571-592.

Palkovitz, R., & Palm, G. (2009). Transitions within fathering. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, *7*(1), 3-22. doi: 10.3149/fth.0701.3

Parens, H. (1975). Parenthood as a developmental phase. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*.

Pasley, K., & Gecas, V. (1984). Stresses and satisfactions of the parental role. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, *62*(7), 400-404.

Pillemer, K., & Suitor, J. J. (1991). " Will I ever escape my child's problems?" Effects of adult children's problems on elderly parents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 585-594.

Pillemer, K., & Suitor, J. J. (2002). Explaining mothers' ambivalence toward their adult children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *64*(3), 602-613. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2002.00602.x

Powell, B., Steelman, L. C., & Carini, R. M. (2006). Advancing age, advantaged youth: Parental age and the transmission of resources to children. *Social Forces*, *84*(3), 1359-1390. doi: 10.1353/sof.2006.0064

Pudrovska, T. (2009). Parenthood, stress, and mental health in late midlife and early old age. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, *68*(2), 127-147.

Rank, M. R., & LeCroy, C. W. (1983). Toward a multiple perspective in family theory and practice: The case of social exchange theory, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory. *Family Relations*, 441-448.

Rankin, L. A., & Kenyon, D. B. (2008). Demarcating role transitions as indicators of adulthood in the 21st century: Who are they?. *Journal of Adult Development*, *15*(2), 87-92. Doi:10.1007/s10804-007-9035-2

Raykov, T., Dimitrov, D. M., & Asparouhov, T. (2010). Evaluation of scale reliability with binary measures using latent variable modeling. *Structural Equation Modeling*, *17*(2), 265-279. doi**:** 10.1080/10705511003659417

Reitzes, D. C., & Mutran, E. J. (2002). Self-concept as the organization of roles: Importance, Centrality, and Balance. *The Sociological Quarterly*, *43*(4), 647-667. doi: 10.1111/j.1533-8525.2002.tb00070.x

Roberts, G. C., Block, J. H., & Block, J. (1984). Continuity and change in parents' child-rearing practices. *Child Development*, 586-597.

Rodgers, R.H., & White, J.M. (2009). Family development theory. In P. Boss, W.J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W.R. Schumm, & S.K. Steinmetz (Eds.) *Sourcebook of family theories and methods a contextual approach* (pp.225-254). New York, NY:Springer.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). The measurement of self-esteem. *Society and the adolescent self image*, *297*, V307.

Rossi, A. S. (1968). Transition to parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 26-39.

Roy, K., Veseley, C., Buckmiller, N., & Fitzgerald, M. (2008). An "odyssey" for disconnected young men: The transition to adulthood as an intergenerational project. *National Council on Family Relations: Report, 53*(1), F15-F17, F19.

Ryff, C. D., Lee, Y. H., Essex, M. J., & Schmutte, P. S. (1994). My children and me: midlife evaluations of grown children and of self. *Psychology and aging*, *9*(2), 195.

Ryff, C. D., Schmutte, P. S., & Lee, Y. H. (1996). How children turn out: Implications for parental self-evaluation. *The parental experience in midlife*, 383-422.

Sam, D. L., Amponsah, B., & Hetland, J. (2008). Values of children among cub-Saharan African women: The case of Ghanaian women. *Journal Of Psychology In Africa*, *18*(4), 521-529. doi: 10.1080/14330237.2008.10820231

Santiago, C. (2004). *An overview of Nancy K. Schlossberg's transition theory.* Class Paper CSA 552.

Schiaffino, K. M. (2003). Other measures of psychological well-being: The Affect Balance Scale (ABS), General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), Life Satisfaction Index-A (LSI-A), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and State-Trait

Anxiety Index (STAI). *Arthritis Care & Research*, *49*(S5), S165-S174. doi: 10.1002/art.11408

Schmitt, D. P., & Allik, J. (2005). Simultaneous administration of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in 53 nations: Exploring the universal and culture-specific features of global self-esteem. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *89*(4), 623. doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.4.623

Schoeni, R. F., & Ross, K. E. (2005). *Material assistance from families during the transition to adulthood*. University of Chicago Press.

Schumacher, K. L. & Meleis, A.I. (1994). Transitions: a central concept in nursing. *Journal of nursing scholarship*, *26*(2), 119-127.

Schumacher, K. L., Jones, P. S., & Meleis, A. I. (1999). Life transition in the older adults. *Helping Elderly in Transition: A Framework for Research and Practice*, *1*, 11-26.

Schulz, M. S., Cowan, C. P., & Cowan, P. A. (2006). Promoting healthy beginnings: A randomized controlled trial of a preventive intervention to preserve marital quality during the transition to parenthood. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, *74*(1), 20. doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.74.1.20

Settersten, R. A. (1998). A time to leave home and a time never to return? Age constraints on the living arrangements of young adults. *Social Forces*, *76*(4), 1373-1400.

Shulman, S., Feldman, B., Blatt, S. J., Cohen, O., & Mahler, A. (2005). Emerging adulthood age-related tasks and underlying self processes. *Journal of adolescent research*, *20*(5), 577-603. doi: 10.1177/0743558405274913

Silverstein, M., & Bengtson, V. L. (1997). Intergenerational solidarity and the structure of adult child-parent relationships in American families 1. *American journal of Sociology*, *103*(2), 429-60.

Silverstein, M., Conroy, S. J., Wang, H., Giarrusso, R., & Bengtson, V. L. (2002). Reciprocity in parent–child relations over the adult life course. *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, *57*(1), S3-S13. doi: 10.1093/geronb/57.1.S3

Silverstein, M., Gans, D., & Yang, F. M. (2006). Intergenerational support to aging parents the role of norms and needs. *Journal of Family Issues*, *27*(8), 1068-1084. doi: 10.1177/0192513X06288120

Singleton, J. (2000). Women caring for elderly family members: Shaping non-traditional work and family initiatives. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 367-375.

Sironi, M., & Furstenberg, F. F. (2012). Trends in the economic independence of young adults in the united states: 1973–2007. *Population and Development Review*, *38*(4), 609-630. doi: 10.1111/j.1728-4457.2012.00529.x

Smith, S. R., Hamon, R. R., Ingoldsby, B. B., & Miller, J. E. (2009). *Exploring family theories*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Spence, D., & Lonner, T. (1971). The" empty nest": a transition within motherhood. *Family Coordinator*, 369-375.

Summers, S. L. (2002). *A summary and critique of Nancy K. Schlossberg's transition theory.* Retrieved from http://www.uiowa.edu/~elps/faculty/pascarel/papers/summers.pdf

Suthers, K. (2006). Women still shouldering the burden: Caregiving in the 21st century. *The Women' s Health Activist*, *31*(4), 4-5.

Swartz, T. T., Kim, M., Uno, M., Mortimer, J., & O'Brien, K. B. (2011). Safety nets and scaffolds: parental support in the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *73*(2), 414-429. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00815.x

Tang, S. (1997). Repeated home leaving behavior of American youth. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *28*(1), 147-159.

Tanner, J. L., & Arnett, J. J. (2009). The emergence of "emerging adulthood": The new life stage between adolescence and young adulthood. In A. Furlong (eds.), *Handbook of youth and young adulthood: New perspectives and agendas*, 39-45. New York, NY: Routledge.

Tapia, J. A. (2013). From the oil crisis to the great recession: Five crises of the world economy.

Thibaut, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. New York:Wiley. http://www.archive.org/details/socialpsychology00thib

Thompson, L., Acock, A. C., & Clark, K. (1985). Do parents know their children? The ability of mothers and fathers to gauge the attitudes of their young adult children. *Family Relations*, 315-320.

Thornton, A., Orbuch, T. L., & Axinn, W. G. (1995). Parent-child relationships during the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Family Issues*, *16*(5), 538-564.

Umberson, D. (1989). Relationships with children: Explaining parents' psychological well-being. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 999-1012.

Umberson, D., & Gove, W. R. (1989). Parenthood and psychological well-being theory, measurement, and stage in the family life course. *Journal of Family Issues*, *10*(4), 440-462.

Umberson, D. (1992). Relationships between adult children and their parents: Psychological consequences for both generations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 664-674.

Umberson, D., Pudrovska, T., & Reczek, C. (2010). Parenthood, childlessness, and well-being: A life course perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *72*(3), 612-629. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00721.x

U.S. Department of State. (2008). *Decades of change: The rise of cultural and ethnic pluralism.* Retrieved from *iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/.../20080407123655eaifas0.7868769.html*

Van Schuur, W. H., & Kruijtbosch, M. (1995). Measuring subjective well-being: Unfolding the Bradburn affect balance scale. *Social Indicators Research*, *36*(1), 49-74.

Waldron-Hennessey, R., & Sabatelli, R. M. (1997). The Parental Comparison Level Index: A measure for assessing parental rewards and costs relative to expectations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 824-833.

Whiteman, S. D., McHale, S. M., & Crouter, A. C. (2011). Family relationships from adolescence to early adulthood: Changes in the family system following firstborns' leaving home. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *21*(2), 461-474. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00683.x

Wongpakaran, T., & Wongpakaran, N. (2011). Confirmatory factor analysis of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: A study of Thai student sample. *J Psychiatry Assoc Thailand*, *56*(1), 59-70.

Young, R. A., Marshall, S. K., Domene, J. F., Graham, M., Logan, C., Zaidman-Zait, A., & Lee, C. M. (2008). Transition to adulthood as a parent-youth project: Governance transfer, career promotion, and relational processes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *55*(3), 297. doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.55.3.297

Zelizer, V. A. R. (1985). Pricing the priceless child: The changing social value of children. Princeton University Press.

VITA

Deborah French Keys

Education

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY M.S. in Family Studies	1988
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN B.S. in Psychology	1977

Certification

Certified Family Life Education (CFLE)	1998

Scholastic Honor

Gamma Sigma Delta (The Honor Society of Agriculture)

Professional Positions

Adult Education Assessment Coordinator for Bluegrass Community and Technical College (associate professor non-tenured track)	1998-2006
School Support Specialist/ Family Life Educator for Bluegrass	1993 – 1995
Impact/Parents' Place, Bluegrass Mental Health and Retardation Board Family life Counselor, Family Worship Center, Lexington, KY	1991-1993
Contract P. A. C. T. Supervisor for Federal Corrections Institution (parent educator) Lexington, KY	1988-1988

Professional Organizations

National Council on Family Relations (NCFR)
National Parent Educators Network (N-PEN)

National, Regional, and State Presentations

National Conference on Family Relations, Poster Session: Understanding A Stretching Experience: County Extension Agents' Experience with At-Risk Families, Minneapolis, MN	2011
Annual Conference on Parent Education and Parenting, Poster Session: What It's Like to be in Court-Mandated Parenting Class, Denton, TX	2011
Kentucky State Adult Education Conference Presenter "Mentor Coaching" Louisville, KY	2003
The Kentucky Attorney General's Conference on Minority Health Issues:	2001

Empowering the Black Community for the 21st Century Presentation: Mental Health Issues of Minority Children, Frankfort, KY	
BAACC Summit II Presentation: Professional Conduct in Working with Multi-Generational Households, Baltimore, MD	1999
American Association of Christian Counseling Regional Conference, Presentation, Working with Families with Limited Resources, Cincinnati, Ohio	1996
Presenter of "Building Children with Character" Workshop, Building Tomorrow One Child At A Time Conference	1996